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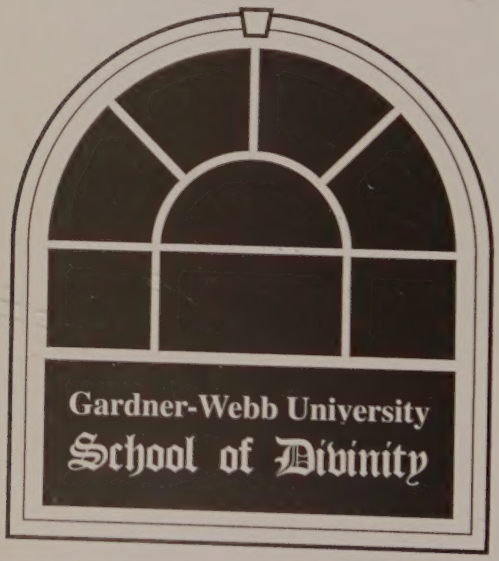

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'THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM'

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'THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM'

BY

REV. JOHN A. HUTTON, D.D.

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NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

Oh, we 're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnight,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a lifetime
That away the rest have trifled.

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INTRODUCTION

MANY years ago my curiosity was excited by observing the electric cars on the streets of a certain city. There was no overhead wire such as I could have understood as the channel for the power that drove those cars. Neither was there any slot in the paved way through which a connection might be maintained with some steady source of power. And yet the cars behaved quite normally. They started, accelerated, halted, according to the will of the driver. On examining the track, I learned the secret. It was this. At intervals of a few yards, among the paved blocks, was one particular block which had a copper knob projecting ever so slightly above the general level. All along the route were those slightly raised copper-headed blocks. In a

moment I saw how the thing was done. Fitted to the car was a kind of metal shoe, which, in passing, grazed the upraised copper-headed block and gathered at the touch a new wave of power. On the strength of that wave the car went forward, and, before the power which it had taken up was exhausted, the car had brushed another knob and was once again revived.

I believe the system has now been abandoned in favour of the overhead wire with its unremitting stream of power. Which also is a parable!

. . . . .

I know that the ideal and perfect arrangement would be for our souls to be in continuous and unbroken contact with Christ who is the source and channel for us of the power of God. But probably, so long as we live, we shall none of us be able to dispense with the assistance of special days and fine occasions when our spirit is aroused afresh and vitalised.

God in His perfect knowledge of us

has given us a life which would seem to be conducted on the intermittent-pressure system. Instead of making our life, as we must believe He might have made it, one long clear day, with no morning mists or evening shadows, and no blessed baptism of darkness or relief of sleep, God presents life to us all in small manageable portions such as we may the better deal with. He has given us a life in which we have to meet only one day at a time. Each day moves on to its close. The darkness falls. Silence settles down upon our little world. If we are wise and would fain sleep quietly and rise refreshed, we shall take the suggestion of the silence to review the day, to recall the main matters which have engaged us. In the quietness, we shall see that there were some things which we allowed to agitate us more than was due to them, and things, on the other hand, to which we gave less heed than was wise or than was kind. We shall see where it would have been better had we taken a different

line—words which we might have restrained, substituting others that would have been quite as firm though more gentle. And yet there they all are—actions, words, silences—and now it is for ever beyond our power to recall them. Had we no belief in God, there would be nothing for us but to lie down, pull the blankets over our head, and harden our uneasy hearts to sleep. But, for us who believe, there is a better way. It is—not to suppress or disregard such questionings as find their opportunity in the night season, hardening our hearts; but to reverence all such questionings; and then by a definite act of humility and a pledge of amendment and reparation, should God spare us to the morrow, to ask Him for Christ's sake to forgive us. Thus, as at the beginning, 'the evening and the morning are one day.'

. . . . .

In the very orderliness and variety of the natural seasons, also, God would appear to be dealing with us in the same

patient and friendly way. For there is something in the human soul which responds to all the various seasons of the year, so that, by the time each season arrives, not only is the natural world ready for it, and even glad that it has come, but we also are ready for it and are glad. Spring, summer, autumn, winter, are not only seasons of the year: they are phases and yearnings of the soul. As we approach each season in turn, there is some new access of power which there and then we may draw into our soul; and in the happiness or new seriousness which we become aware of, we perceive how much we had come to need just such an experience.

These ordinances of God in nature—the solemn falling of darkness dividing day from day so that we may feel our responsibility for each day as it passes; the changes wrought by the various seasons of the year—alas! they may fail to have their stirring and lively effect upon our minds. For we come to be indifferent

to things to which we have grown accustomed.

And so God, who cares greatly for us, has recourse to other means by which to break up within us the hardening effect of time. To one heart He sends some astonishing human love. To another He sends some startling sorrow. In one case, a face kindles and becomes beautiful with the light of some private and most blessed relief; another's head is suddenly bowed to the dust under some grief or shame. But in every case it is a change, and an opportunity. In each case it is as when the car passed over the copper-headed irregular paving-stone, and by that contact replenished itself from some hidden source of power.

. . . . .

It is, of course, quite true that if we were all we should be, we should have no need of special days or special providences. We should go on continuously and equally under the happy compulsion of God's uninterrupted spirit. But we

are none of us as we should be: we are what we are. And God is patient. The Church of Christ seeks to embody the same patience with us in its recurring ordinances. Over and above the Morning and Evening prayers which she enjoins upon us all as safeguards for our daily life, once in seven days the Lord's Day comes round, which was designed as a day of particular and deliberate contact with God and with Christ and with all those higher, nobler things which lurk in our souls; a Day when a man may come out from behind his counter, or may leave his desk, or his machine, or his tools, and open his lungs to the air of his true homeland.

It is true that every day should be the Lord's Day. And yet we must not try to be wiser than our fathers in any of these ancient precautions. If the days simply went on and on, unbroken, uninterrupted by definite occasions, certainly if we who have inherited the lofty ritual of the Lord's Day were so to neglect

it as finally to allow it to drop out of the calendar, the result would simply be that the general level of life would sink and all the lights of the soul would be lowered, and the Christian interpretation of man and of human destiny would become more and more obscure.

In addition to the daily prayers, and to the weekly Public Worship, in some cases parallel and simultaneously, we have our regularly recurring Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Each of the great branches of Christ's Church has, as the result of its own experience, come to put the accent, one here, the other there, in the great harmony of loyalty to Christ. Behind the claim made by the Church—Greek, Roman, Anglican—that in the Eucharist an almost physical contact with Christ is established, even those who resent such language may share the final and even desperate belief which is there affirmed, that *Christ can come as close to us as we will permit Him, and will become to us in*

the way of personal power all that we ask and need. With the Methodists, Holy Communion is *a season of joy.* With the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, it is *a time rather of compunction and repentance.* But in the thought and purpose of every Church, the Lord's Supper is offered as a time of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord.

. . . . .

I recall that car which made me curious in a foreign city one day long ago. It was propelled by an intermittent contact. It touched at points a great source of persistent power. Before the energy drawn from one contact had grown feeble or too feeble, another contact had been established replenishing its reservoir; and so the car performed its function in the world of things.

Not otherwise does man perform his function in the world of the Spirit.

And so it was with full knowledge of us, as creatures who under the various play of life are apt to lose our power for

high thinking and fine living, as creatures, alas! who are prone to dissipate the precious fluid of our personal force upon unworthy and trivial things—it was with full knowledge of us that He, Jesus, as His last deliberate recommendation to those who purposed following in His steps, ordained and advised them, and through them us, that from time to time we should meet together and of set purpose recall the night in which He was betrayed.

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I

HOW CHRIST PREPARED HIMSELF TO DIE

'Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'—HEBREWS xii. 2.

WE must not hesitate to take these words as meaning precisely what they say. And what is it that they say? They tell us that the deep motive of our Lord's suffering, the thing which carried Him through the desolateness of Gethsemane and Calvary, was the joy of a prospect that lay on the other side. For a long time now, we have rather shrunk from attributing to Jesus any such motive or emotion. We have allowed ourselves to suppose that somehow it would be more worthy of Jesus to say of Him that He endured the suffering of life and the agony of death, out of a sheer sense of

duty, not permitting Himself at any moment the alleviation of a prospect. In this way, without intending any such thing, we have really brought about our own minds the same evils as have come upon the Church as often as it has laid the emphasis exclusively upon the deity and unintelligibleness of Christ's experience, passing over too lightly, or neglecting entirely, the rich and human aspects. We must not hesitate to affirm, that anything which makes the experience of our Lord unintelligible is something which He Himself would not approve.

Now, *we* know how much it helps us—and this not in our worst hours but in our best hours—to be able to look forward and to foresee the day when we shall be able to lift up our heads and look round about us in peace. And it is to make our Lord not divine at all, but merely inhuman, to suppose that He did not share with us this human and tender necessity. For far too long now, we have been speaking as though our Lord was

a sad victim of life. The New Testament is against that view. The New Testament protests the contrary view. It is only by the neglect of the deepest passages in the New Testament that we can for one moment allow our minds to dwell *sadly* upon the whole experience of our Lord.

In that long discourse which we have in S. John's gospel, containing, we may believe, the last thoughts that occupied our Lord's heart and mind on the very night in which He was betrayed, having faced everything in imagination that the world could do against Him, having recalled the years in which He had been able to do what He had done, having weighed up everything and balanced the darkness and the light—with what mood was it that our Lord reviewed it all? 'Lifting up His eyes to Heaven,' we read, He said, 'Father, I thank Thee that I have known Thee.'

On the way to Calvary—to look for a moment into another gospel—when the Cross was making Him stoop, the

women who beheld Him could not keep back their tears; but He wishing to comfort them, and also to correct their superficial estimate of what was passing in His soul, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, weep for yourselves.' It is the language of one who is far more vividly aware of the glory of His position than of the pain of it. It is the behaviour of one, in fact, who sees something so great and beautiful and good, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with it.

Now, I say, we think far too little of our Lord from that point of view. We think of Him as depressed, as defeated, and—this in spite of all our protests—as sad. We think of Him as if it had pleased God to deprive Him of that irreducible minimum of the spirit which we call hope. By doing this, we separate our Lord from all the brave souls that went before Him, and from all the brave souls that have come after Him. For through all the ages, the great sufferers

have had 'meat to eat that the world knew not of.' They have had more reason for joy than for gloom, or they would never have persevered. And if, as happened, our Lord endured the Cross, it was because He despised the shame of it in view of the joy which He perceived coming towards Him in the future. I am quite sure it would work something not short of a revolution in our whole religious life, if we could believe, what the New Testament appeals to us to believe, what Christ repeatedly in set words asks us to believe, that for those like Himself in the matter of fidelity, for those who take His way, though life may do to them what life did to Him, it is all worth while; it is cheap at the cost.

It is because we have not this New Testament and Christian way of considering our Lord's Passion, that we have all fallen into the sad way of considering death amongst ourselves, even when it comes most beautifully. Indeed, in our

sadness, we are accusing ourselves of having nothing in our lives so beautiful and good that it would be a fine thing for us were God to call us to show our love for the beautiful thing by laying down our life for it.

Well, then, let us make that plain, and let us check ourselves from mere disabling sadness over the suffering and death of our blessed Lord. If we will have any feeling at all akin to sadness, let it be one of envy; even as in these present days, in the midst of our grief, we are aware of something like envy of the brave youths who have finished their course because they kept the faith.

This verse of Scripture, occurring where it does, fortifies me in the view that I take of the spirit of it. Strictly speaking, it forms the close of the eleventh chapter, a chapter indeed of such a kind that when it loses the power to thrill us it will be proof that we are dead! And what is the subject of that chapter but an appeal, to every one who believes in

God, and in God as we know Him, to bear with great happiness such sorrows as life may involve us in; that far from thinking ourselves forsaken or ill-used or defeated by the world, we are to think of ourselves as of the great company of those who in every age and through all the ages have kept God's flag flying in this universe; and that all such fidelity can never be in vain!

All faithful souls, indeed, are invited to believe that their fidelity has joined itself to the fidelity of the Son of God; that it is God's generous way of looking at things to see all our human fidelities within the fidelity of Christ; and that we who have shared our Master's human experience will share His everlasting glory—'who for the joy that was set before us, endured.'

One can see what it is we were contending for when we rather shrank from saying that our Lord endured for the sake of some joy which lay in front of Him. We were wishing, and quite rightly,

to defend the purity of our Lord's achievement from the imputation of merely worldly rewards or dreams. The joy which Christ saw before Him was a real thing; but that is not to say that it was anything material. We need not mean that it helped our Lord through His Passion to look forward to a day when that Passion would be completed. The joy that He anticipated was not merely or not at all the joy of a change or a reward. Why should we not believe that our Lord foresaw what was coming to Him? Indeed, we know that He did foresee it. In so many words, He declared to His disciples that if He laid down His life in love for man, the human heart would never be able to forget Him, or to forget Him for long; and that the human heart which did forget Him for a time, would come back to Him with the greater passion because of the interval of distance and forgetting.

And so, why should we not believe that the thought in our Lord's mind which

the writer here describes as 'a joy that was set before Him' was just this: that our Lord foresaw that through all the ages, and in all lands, the human heart, the finer heart, the heart in its saddest and in its happiest hours; the heart in its fear, in its shame, in its repentance, as in its gratitude; the heart oppressed by life's mystery, perplexed by the silence of what lies beyond us; that such a heart—the human heart—would turn to Him and clothe Him as we have clothed Him, with words of praise which, until He came, were due only to God Himself?

And has Christ been mistaken in His prospect? Has it not come to pass just as He foresaw? Is He not now, as a matter of fact, so much to the heart of man to-day, that every Name which we give Him is less than we mean?

Was it not worth His while to be what He was, to do what He did, and to suffer as He suffered? Has He not risen again, has He not ascended into Heaven? Has

He not taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God? Has He not shaken the very heavens by His own personal achievement, so that no conception of God can henceforward endure for more than a season except it come to terms with that revelation and understanding of God which Christ embodied in His mission here below?

Let us think about these things. We should all protest against our own readiness to think too sadly, or to think sadly at all, of the death of Christ, which we celebrate at the Communion season. Let us feel rather how idle, how trifling, how destitute of any token of immortality, is any life lived here in this world which has *not* at its heart communion with that victorious Passion of the Son of Man.

At the stage of my own experience as a man which I have reached—and I know that I am not speaking for myself alone but for serious people everywhere—the meaning of Christ's suffering and death which the Holy Spirit would bring home

to us one by one is this: that we do wrong to think of it all in a sad or disheartened way; that we do wrong to think of it as a triumph for the world. We do wrong to think of our Lord as merely a victim of the world. Rather are we to see in it all, the supremacy of spirit, the greatness of love, the excellence of fidelity, the reality of God.

II

THE PLACE WHERE WE MAY WELL BE AT ONE

'Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.'
PHILIPPIANS iii. 16.

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is something, at least, which all the Churches in Christendom have in common. Perhaps it will be by the simple acceptance of the ideas and beliefs which are embodied in that Sacrament, that the divided and broken Church may one day return to unity. For though the great divisions of Christendom—Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical — surround this Sacrament with practices which differ, and approach it with differing expectations, it is possible, when one brings sympathy and charity, to find that

beneath the surface they mean the same.

I have no great quarrel with the language which any historical Church uses with regard to the Sacrament. They are entirely right in claiming a certain grace or state of blessedness if that be their experience. Where they go wrong, and where indeed they offend against true Catholic charity, is when they deny to others the particular blessedness and grace which they, on the basis of an equally authentic experience, also claim. Here as elsewhere we are right in what we claim for ourselves, and we are apt to be wrong in what we deny to others. But behind and beneath all these differences in speech and custom, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper offers and secures, for all who approach it with a simple heart, the same great and unspeakable blessings: it answers the same deep cries of the soul.

For in this wild and stupendous universe, where, by comparison with the

immense bulk of things, we one by one seem to ourselves to be so weak and at times so futile, we wish to be assured that Some One loves us and cares for us, and knows about us, and all this with a passion or with a patience that will never die. And then again, face to face with our own moral nature, knowing as we do that the very highest personal behaviour is demanded of us one by one, confessing in secret that the demand is just and that it is not impossible, and yet knowing at the same time that we have been what we have been and have failed as we have failed; that if He with whom we have to do were strict to mark iniquity not one of us would stand—we look away from all that, and we wonder if there is Some One good enough and deep enough and forgiving enough to see us, not in the light of what we have done, nor in the light of what we have been, but in the light of what in our best moments we would wish to have done and would wish to have been. We look away and

turn away sometimes sadly, sometimes with anger and disgust at ourselves, we look away and wonder if there is any one in the whole universe who can look upon us with more hopefulness than we feel at times when we look upon ourselves.

And then again, knowing what is demanded of us, and justly demanded of us, and knowing our weakness and failure face to face with this demand; knowing that sometimes if we had had a little more power, a little more energy, a little more strength or endurance, a little more assistance from Some One who could assist us without humbling us unduly, we should perhaps not have failed, and would not, it may be, fail in days to come; we look away and we wonder whether there is a resource for people like ourselves in Some One who can come near to us. We know how on the purely human plane—if there be any plane of life that is purely human, in the sense that it is not related to some higher order —we do get assistance from the very

fact that some other human heart is pledged to love us; that one here and there in our human life who knows us almost as well as we know ourselves, still believes in us and cares for us; and such knowledge helps us in many a difficult moment of our personal obedience. And we wonder whether there is Any One anywhere, whom we might call God, who has this power and would put it at our disposal, if we ask it properly, to assist us to be ourselves; who would help us to achieve that better self which in the midst of all our weakness and failure and backsliding we nevertheless protest is *there*, inviting us and giving us no rest until we seek it.

And finally—face to face with the fact that one day we pass away, and that all things seem to pass away, that we appear to live in a world about which nothing is so sure as this, that the fashion of it changes and that nothing remains long in one stay—we look away from all this in turn, and we wonder whether we

human beings can relate and join our life to some great unfaltering life, in which we would be willing to lose gladly all that is merely temporary and of this present world from our souls, if the finer and protesting things will but survive.

'He had an envy for its black
Inscrutability;
He felt impatiently the lack
Of that great law whereby
The river never travels back
But still goes gliding by;

'But still goes gliding by, nor clings
To passing things that die,
Nor shows the secrets that it brings
From its strange source on high.
And he felt, "We are two living things,
And the weaker one is I."'

And what have we offered to us in this Sacrament but the answer from God to all these misgivings and appeals?

We spoke of that fear which haunts all finer souls that we who seem to ourselves the creatures of a day may have no significance in this vast scheme of things. Now, I know of no answer which

can silence such a fear except the faith that it is a heart like the heart of Jesus which beats at the centre of things. Through Jesus we see into the heart of God. That holy love which dwelt in all fulness in Him, we cannot think of as having passed away. It can only be that we from time to time pass out of the knowledge of it, pass out of the warmth of its embrace. But certain it is that Jesus knew a region where the love of God was unimpeded, indubitable, and He pledged Himself to us that He could take us into that region one by one even now in this world, and in the end of the days would take us there and keep us there for ever.

Then comes that honest sense of shame which besets us from time to time as we consider our poor and faulty behaviour in this great earnest world. We know that the highest is demanded of us; we know that God has the right to expect of rational and moral beings a wise and controlled behaviour, and we know how

we have failed. And so the great misgiving descends upon us which has descended upon all rare and deep souls through the ages: is there forgiveness with God? And here again I know of no faith to quiet and compose that sadness of the soul but the faith that our Lord Jesus Christ was God's appointed messenger, to announce to us one by one His willingness to put our sins behind His back, and to take us anew into His love and discipline.

Next comes to honest and perceiving minds that cry for assistance from elsewhere. We agree with the poet:—

> 'Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!'

We know indeed, and thank God for the experience, that the love of another human soul will assist us in our life's more lonely passages. But we know that there are passages so personal and lonely that even our nearest and dearest are strangers to us. But we do know that

in these most lonely and final and personal places in our life, we can hold fellowship through this same Christ with God. Explain it as they will who would deny it, the fact is we rise from this fellowship strong and dedicated men.

Finally, face to face with this passing world, in which we all do fade as a leaf, a world whose pathos has been celebrated by poets and by singers: *where*, once again, do we rest our heads and restrain those long, long thoughts which only paralyse and confute our reason and our will, where but in our Christian faith that 'the Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms'?

In God's providence we are invited to come together of set purpose, and to share in a sacred rite which means all these things to us: that God knows us, and that His knowledge of us has not abated His loving purpose towards us; that He is prepared to forgive us our sins, and to take us anew into His love; that it will not be possible for us to draw

near to Him and to touch the hem of Christ's garment without coming away the better equipped for life; and that face to face with this passing show of a world, we are in contact here and now with One who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

And so we should come to this feast with the delight and the expectation of those who, because of life and of their own nature, are hungry and athirst.

III

ANTICIPATING GOD'S JUDGMENT

'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.'
1 Corinthians xi. 31.

In coming together for preparation we are obeying an instruction of our own hearts. To say no more, we may find out a good deal about ourselves by observing our own behaviour at such a time as this. It will be a good sign, if we *wish* to come here. For what we now want to do is the deepest sign of what we have become—in the matter of taste and feeling. It is always a horrid possibility that fine things may die within us. Cromwell, in a letter to his favourite daughter Mary, warns her against 'the dangers of a departing heart.' And those of us who are afraid of becoming hard and dull to life's highest

appeals are glad of a time like this when we may know whether things beneath the surface of our lives are as sound and active as we would like them to be, and as we believe they once were. Our Lord once upon a time warned His disciples that their secret thoughts and feelings and ambitions all had a way of working themselves out in obvious signs; that 'what they whispered in secret in the hidden chamber of their heart would one day be as plain to everybody as though they were shouting it from the housetops.' And the converse is equally true. If a hidden thing tends to have an outward expression, an outward thing is proof of an inner bias or disposition. We do certain things or we cease from doing them. We suppose that if we liked we could behave differently; that we could do what we are proposing not to do, and that we could refuse to do what nevertheless we are about to do. But in all that we are probably deceiving ourselves. The truth is we do what we want to do,

what at the moment the entire habit of our deepest life is compelling us to do. So that what we do is the reflection of what we are. In the Day of Judgment, our Lord has told us, we are to be judged not by what we thought or by what we imagined, or by what we dreamed, but by what we did. Paderewski once confessed that if he allowed *one* day to pass without severe practice, he himself was aware of the difference. If he were to allow *two* days to pass, the experts would know. And if he allowed *a week* to pass, everybody would know.

And so, we should welcome any occasion which has this power to keep us informed as to the state of our health—before God.

. . . . .

For it is a great thing to catch ourselves before we have gone too far. There is a stage when we may blow away some dust with our own breath. There is a later stage when that dust may have lodged some subtly-working thing in our blood. A ship, after voyaging over wide seas,

has its compass readjusted, so that any deflection from the absolutely right and true—the result of a strain or a jar, or of the weakness of its own parts—may be put right. We mortals are always out on the voyage of life: and, once more, wise people will give God thanks for such opportunities as come thus quietly and regularly into our religious life for noting any irregularity in the working of our soul, any fault, any loss of quickness in our response to life and to God.

. . . . .

Who knows but that this also was in our Lord's mind when He instituted 'the Supper'! It is quite certain that He was looking ahead, and far ahead. It is quite certain, too, that in all His words, and in that gesture of absolute self-devotion when He knelt down and washed their feet, He was contriving to make the hour compact with saving memories. It was His hope that as often as those who knew Him and cared for Him to any degree—and He did not forbid even Judas

to the feast—came together and bethought themselves, things would take place within their hearts: and chiefly would this happen—they would become aware of themselves. They might become tender, or they might become hard: but whatever happened they themselves would be aware of it.

. . . . .

If we are in earnest, a hint is all that is needed. During this season of Communion, it may be we shall feel and shall be able to say, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things—my ups and downs of mood and purpose, my high moments and my low moments, the uprisings and the downsittings of my spirit—Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee.' Or we may feel as they have felt who in all ages have cried out in secret, 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.' Or it may be that what we must say is something more severe, more humbling. It may be that all we can say is, 'Lord, have mercy upon me.' But whatever we

feel we may say or must say, let us say it; and, if we mean it, it will have brought us into His presence: nay, it will be as though we were kneeling to receive His benediction. For those who, out of any set of inward and personal circumstances, *will* call Him Lord, are still in the land of the living and in the place of hope.

IV

GOD'S EAGERNESS TO SPARE US

'We have an advocate with the Father.'—1 John ii. 1.

I should like to lead up to that great saying, to prepare our minds for the reception of it. For it is a grave thing to deal in great words without an accompanying and understanding heart. To understand with the heart any deep saying we must feel the value of it for beings like ourselves so situated that the deep saying comes home to us as an answer to some deep cry of our nature, or as an alleviation to some harsh condition of life. In fact, to understand is to appreciate; and to appreciate a thing is to perceive how the thing stands between us and some dark prospect.

All this is certainly true of any saying concerning God. Under the name of

'God' we place the entire external world, nature and human nature, all space and time—the entire system, in short, with which we have one by one to do. Anything therefore we may know or may believe regarding God is something which should come home at once to us as our deepest concern. For this universe, including all space and time, *seems* at least soon or late to gain the victory over us. It goes its way undisturbed, so far as we can see, by our proposals and enterprises. We look into the face of it, as we might look into the face of the Sphinx. But there is never even the quiver of an eyelid. The great thing stares stonily out upon the desert, out upon infinite space and infinite time. As we look and look it may seem to us as though for a moment the features were relaxing toward us; but that may only be our own fond imagination. We fancy that some one or something must be a little sorry for us because we are so sorry for ourselves. And when we look again, this time more

critically, it is as we feared: the great figure is still staring outwards, seeing nothing or seeing everything, certainly not aware of us.

Now, we might say, and there are times when men do say, Why vex ourselves knocking and knocking at a door where there is nobody who might answer, or where there is nobody who will? Why torment ourselves with questions? Why reason? Why not cease thinking about things which are beyond our range? Why not be satisfied with the life of nature and recall our minds and hearts from all those lonely voyagings and pathetic homecomings? May not a man have his wife and his children, and a friend or two, some task also in this world to which he may apply himself with honour, with now and then some temporary change, a day in the country or by the sea, a fine book, all in a world where there are the sun and the moon and the stars and a wind upon the heath?

But if man really had the power to destroy within himself this questioning, voyaging spirit, we may be sure that long since he would have used such a power. The fact is he cannot, for more than a very short time, cease to think in some final way about his life. This instinct to think in a large and final way about life leads those who are so doomed into all manner of solitary and poignant situations of the soul. They suffer deeply for their pains. They are apt to die young. They are always poor. They seem dangerous to their contemporaries, who for that reason oppose them, sometimes even putting them to death. They are our men of genius, or in another region our saints and prophets and martyrs. When they join hands, as we in imagination can see them join hands across the centuries, we agree that their joined hands form a kind of pathway of light on both sides of which lie gulfs of darkness, and that the light which they radiate is the light by which we live, that it is all the

light we have. With this kind of soul, predestined to face life to the uttermost, to unsettle and refresh the human race, come Job, and Jeremiah, and Dante, and Shakespeare, and Dostoievsky, and, according to the flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, whom, for the depth of His insight and the moral majesty of His Person, we now call Lord and God.

Such is one of the ways by which the human heart has sought God. Oppressed by the silence and ambiguity both of nature and of human history, man has cried out towards Some One—within both nature and history and beyond both. He has listened for guidance and has welcomed light on the meaning of his life here, and as to how he might so think of himself that face to face with his vast surroundings he need not despair. Along this road, by a long circuit indeed, we who are called Christians have come at length to Christ whom we hail as the Light of the world.

. . . . .

But there has always been another line of inquiry, the human soul setting out from another final personal anxiety. Along this other road man has travelled and at length has come to Christ, whom, in the transport of their hour of meeting, he has clothed with the glory due to One who has given him *peace*.

For the bread of life has two ingredients: they are light and peace. These we believe we have in Christ.

There are, all this is to say, two equally final demands which we make of any Religion or Faith which shall satisfy us. It shall say something or do something or be something to compose our mind, so that we shall triumph over the horrid innuendo of the natural world—that a man is but a bit of nature, irrelevant, not of its essence: like a leaf on a tree, gay for a time, but in the end a withered thing swept into a dust-heap by the wind. A man's faith must save him from *that* form of desolation. And again a man's faith must say something or do something

or be something which shall *quiet his conscience*. Along one way to God a man is projected by his fear of nature, that it will hurt him or mock him. Along another way to God man has been projected by his fear of that personal and intimate world of moral shadows and compunctions which we call our conscience. And it is the greatness and finality of the Christian faith that 'the Lord is' at once 'our Light and our Salvation.'

. . . . .

I might have said all this more simply and in a more stately form if I had recalled the saying of the philosopher Kant, which fortunately has become familiar. 'There are two things,' said Kant, 'and two only, which fill me with awe—the starry heavens above and the moral law within.' All that I have said so far has been to urge that, face to face with the one, as face to face with the other, a man must have some way of thinking of himself and of the mystery of his existence which

shall lift up his head at once from *fear* and from *shame*.

. . . . .

And now I have left myself but a little time in which to bring home to ourselves the comfort of this great idea, that 'we have an Advocate with the Father.' A saying like this, and the idea or fact which it enshrines, is a kind of rest-house on that way by which the soul seeks peace out of its moral failures and compunctions. A saying like this is not so much for those whose minds are perplexed about the world. It is for those rather who are unhappy over themselves. And what is it which is promised here, or indeed declared to be the fact? It is that there is now in the presence of God One, the exalted spiritual embodiment of Him who was Jesus of Nazareth, and that He pleads with His Father the case of every one who out of a contrite and humble heart asks Him so to do.

. . . . .

Now, what such a great idea will mean

to us one by one will depend upon whether we feel the need of such a faith. Good people, in the sense of sensitive and tender-souled people, have always felt the need of such a faith, even when it seemed to them that any such faith was something too good to be true. But let us be sure that we understand what is declared to be the fact.

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We all know that there are two sides to our life: one that is turned outwards to the world; the other that is turned inwards towards ourselves. We are all agreed that the aspect of our life which is turned inwards is more true to our real nature. We all agree that we are what we are in secret. We are all agreed, too, who believe in life after death, that what we are now at heart and in secret is what we shall be quite plainly and unmistakably in that world of realities to which we believe we are tending.

Well, now, at the present time the world sees for the most part only what

we do; it cannot see precisely what we are. Of course, any sound life which would like also to be happy will give itself no rest until its outward expression and its inward spirit correspond. It is the one veritable fruit of any faith or religion which we claim to have, that it shall more and more control and express itself in our outward behaviour. I have often said things like that; for example, that there is no such thing as a man being good merely at bottom. Goodness is not goodness if it remains at the bottom. Goodness is a grace; and a grace is something which is at once invisible yet visible. Nevertheless, it is true of all of us, in varying degrees doubtless, that there is an aspect of ourselves which we present to the world, and an aspect of ourselves upon which in secret only we ourselves may look. But just here all sorts of complications come in. There are people, we may believe, who are not so good as they appear to be. Yes, but there are people, we may equally well believe, who

are very much better than they appear to be. There are people who are the victims of a kind of perverse and 'thrawn' devil which keeps them from appearing to be the kind and loving and even timid people that they all the while are. And so God sometimes in a kind of despair over us has to send upon us some shattering grief or some stabbing pain so that our heart and flesh shall cry out and we shall disclose the last secrets of our nature. My own convinced belief is that this in some measure is true of all of us. We are much better than we appear to be. In the case of the vast majority of human beings, I am quite sure that for some miserable reason, or out of some wretched mood of pride or mischievousness, we hold down and keep from its free play some fine thing which lurks within us, something which we know is there even while we are behaving contrary to it, something of such a kind that if we imagined we were entirely without it we should hurry away into a quiet place

and shut the door and cry to God in secret, 'Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.'

I am quite sure that if we would all yield ourselves up heartily to the good that is in us, Christ might come again any day and find a world ready to receive Him, a world of which, with His fine eye, He would not be ashamed.

Well, now, that helps us so far towards understanding and taking to our own hearts this deep and beautiful faith that 'we have an advocate with God the Father.' Of course, any beautiful idea like that may be abused by us and misunderstood; as in the case of one who will say, 'Yes, that is so, it matters not so much what I do. It only matters what I am. I may not appear to be kind, I may not appear to be loving. But I have it in me to be kind. And I have it in me to be loving. Besides, once upon a time I was quite kind and quite loving. And although I admit I have not exercised

these finer things much of late, they must be there and God is sure to know about them.' All of which, of course, is merely silly if it were not such a common way for one to take comfort to himself dishonourably. What should we think of one who, becoming a little uneasy as to his financial position, sought to comfort himself by looking over the counterfoils in a pile of old cheque-books!

It reminds me of an incident which I often recall with amusement. I was introduced once upon a time on a golf-course to a stranger, with whom I played. As we set out from the first tee, knowing my profession he decided to suit his conversation to what he assumed would be my habit of mind. 'I am afraid,' he said, 'I am not now much of a churchman. But,' he hastened to add, 'my wife is a very keen churchwoman; and we have the vicar to dinner once a year.' To which after a moment's silence I replied, 'My dear man, you 're all right!'

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But let me recall myself to the beauty and tenderness of this article of our Christian faith. This I can best do thus; for truth cannot be taught by formulas and propositions and arguments, but only by an illustration and a tale—as our Lord acknowledged, who educated the human race on God by telling half a dozen great stories.

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante tells us that on the Purgatorial Mount, that is to say on the way to God from which there is never again any turning back, he met a man whom he had known or had known about on earth, in Italy. On earth he had been a scoundrel, sensual, brutal, cruel. Yet here he was on the way to heaven and fit to be on the way. As Dante looked at him, the poor soul knew all that was passing in the poet's mind—that he was questioning his right to be amongst the hopeful ones. Whereupon the man explained. With a gentle voice, a voice full of experience, a voice resonant with the depths and heights of

some still-remembered crisis of the soul, he told Dante that he was precisely Buonconte; that he had been indeed a bad man. That in the bloody battle which Dante knew about, he, Buonconte, had been mortally wounded. As he lay there dying, thoughts came to him, thoughts of how wrongly he had lived, and how now he was about to die. It was not fear: it was shame and self-condemnation and pity for himself who had so played the fool: and in that mood he had died. At the moment, evil spirits swooped down to snatch him away to the place of torment. But quicker than they, good angels came to bear him to that place of hope. Together they debated for the right to his soul: for it would appear that there are rules which even those in hell obey. The good angels peered into his closed eyelids; and on the edge of his eyelids there still hung a tear! For the sake of that one single tear he was now well on the way to God.

And now it may be our hearts are tender enough to realise what it may mean—that 'we have an advocate with the Father'; that One there is 'who ever liveth to make intercession for us'; that 'He is able to keep against that day that which we have committed to Him' —though it be something as little, as unknown to the world, as one little tear.

V

THE WAVE ON WHICH CHRIST CROSSED THE BAR

> 'And supper being ended . . . Jesus knowing . . . that He was come from God, and went to God . . . riseth . . . and began to wash the disciples' feet.'
>
> S. John xiii. 2-5.

What strikes us in these words of S. John is not that Jesus washed the disciples' feet; it is the motive which, according to S. John, led Jesus to render this lowly service. S. John tells us that Jesus, 'knowing that He was come from God, and went to God,' rose and began to wash the disciples' feet. S. John tells us that after supper there was, it would seem, stillness for a moment. No one cared to speak, for there was too much to say. The shadow of what was coming to them all had settled on their souls, and they waited for Jesus to break the silence. It is here that S. John presumes

to tell us what was passing, in that moment's silence, through the mind of our Lord. 'Jesus,' he says, 'knowing that He was come from God, and went to God, riseth and began to wash the disciples' feet.'

It is true that throughout His ministry Jesus knew that He was come from God and went to God. From the day when —to go no further back—on the bank of the Jordan the Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove, and from the sky the voice of God was heard, from that day to the day and hour of Calvary when He cried, 'Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit,' Jesus was aware that He came from God and went to God. We may well believe, then, that in telling us that just at this moment Jesus knew that He came from God and went to God, S. John means that just at this moment the knowledge that He had ever His home in God came with a peculiar force and tenderness. Just as on a day of average sunshine, we have seen the

world suddenly lit up to a new degree of brightness by the sun, which at the moment had sailed into a blue space in a cloudy sky: so, it would appear, something came into the mind of Jesus which for the moment had not been so distinctly in His thoughts.

When we recall our Lord's public life, so far as we may, we remember how more than once He withdrew from men, even from His disciples, and retired to pray. At one time He went into the mountain, at another time into a desert place. In order to see His way more clearly, in order to count the cost and to realise His own overflowing resources, in order to feel the awful claim of Love, in order to test and to enjoy the nearness and sufficiency of God, Jesus at times took steps to be alone and quiet. It was not that He ever doubted His Father's will or missed the feeling of His Father's hand. No: He ever lived in God. And yet, so truly was He our brother, He felt the need of, and certainly He sought,

times of greater solitude, when He could take a long look in front of Him, 'On to the bounds of the waste, on to the City of God.' He was always sure of God, indeed, also sure of Himself, but—

> 'Ah! the little more, and how much it is,
> And the little less, and what worlds away!'

S. John would have us believe, then, that just at this moment our Lord realised with peculiar force and tenderness that He had come from God and was going back to God—just as we sometimes feel the beating of our heart though our heart is always beating.

'Jesus, knowing that He was come from God, and went to God, riseth and began to wash the disciples' feet.' Jesus, that is to say, remembering who He was, remembering His rank, His dignity, His name, stooped to do the lowliest service. Now—and this is our first lesson—think how differently it affects many, and is apt to affect us all, to recall any circumstance about ourselves, our birth, our

education, our place in the world. When our Lord remembered who He was, He rose up to do the lowliest thing. And yet how often is it not the case that the very thing which led Jesus to this lowly service has the very contrary effect upon us! How many things do we not excuse ourselves from doing, by allowing ourselves to suppose that somehow—and we never ask ourselves exactly 'how'—that somehow it is not for such as we are to do certain lowly and beautiful things! We admit that certain lowly and beautiful things will always have to be done in this world by some people to others, and that, if this world is ever to be the happy place which our religion declares God intends it to be, the number of people who are ready to do lowly and beautiful things to others for no reward at all will have to go on increasing. And yet we are all apt to suppose that we are not the very people from whom these lowly and beautiful services are properly to be expected. We take refuge by reminding

ourselves of the population of the whole earth. We like to suppose that somehow people are always to be found to fill the necessary places and to do what we admit must be done. We could not bear to think that in this great world the lowly and beautiful things were not being done; but we can bear to think that we ourselves are not doing them. And if we were to go back behind the excuses which we make to ourselves, we should find that in various ways we were saying to ourselves that somehow it is not for us—born as we were, or educated as we were, or placed as we are—to do these very things: and further, that people as a rule do not now look to us for them—not seeing that this last, if it be true, is to our shame. Thus, the very circumstance which prompted our Lord to rise and do His lowly and beautiful deed, serves us as a reason for not doing many a deed of the same kind. Remembering who He was, He rose and washed the disciples' feet. Remembering who we are,

we are tempted in various ways to gather our robes about us and pass on.

Once again, 'Jesus knowing that He was come from God, and went to God, riseth and began to wash the disciples' feet.' We may learn, from those words and from that action, what is the only motive which will enable any of us to meet life with a fresh face and a fresh heart and to fulfil our ideal with fidelity and exactness, without reluctance or impatience or anger. That we are 'come from God and are going to God'—once believe that, and you have a wind in your sails that will never fail. A thing is not intolerable when we can believe that it has a blessed purpose, and when we know that it will end. However you are going to explain the fundamental and imperishable nature of man—unless you embrace with enthusiasm the Word of God upon the whole matter—certain it is that man is such a being that he only does his best and continues doing it under the stimulus and appeal of unworldly considerations.

When all is said, the thing that has shaken all despotisms in Church and State, the thing which has 'broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder,' the thing which has reinforced the human soul so that it has found courage to undertake and patience to complete quite incredible performances in the region of the spirit—that thing is—what? It is just the thing which came upon Samson in his imprisonment when it gave him strength to carry away the gates of the city of Gaza; it is just what came upon Samson in the day of his humiliation when it gave him the strength to pull down the house about the tyrannous Philistines. 'O Lord God,' he cried in secret, 'remember me and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God.' And once more, I ask, what is it? It is the recognition by man that he belongs to God. Only a soul can move a soul: and whenever man has done anything great in the realm of truth or liberty, whenever he has risen from the dead, it

has been in consequence of the recognition by him of his kinship with God; it has been—as in the case of the widow's son of Nain—in consequence of some word from God spoken to him and arousing an echo in the depths of his nature.

But to speak of simpler and less dramatic things: nothing is so futile as mere advice, I mean as a method of arousing the soul to generous or holy living. Advice, however good, never helps us at the push or strain of a trial, and never can lift up our heart again once our heart has been crushed. It is only some great faith, some great hope, some great love, coming to us or coming back to us afresh, which can re-form our purposes and sustain us through monotonous days, and in the obscure and humble places of our life. Wherefore the Gospel of Jesus is not advice—it is *News*—it is news about God.

I believe this is a thought which has value for every man and woman who wishes to take life seriously. I suppose

the feeling against which we have most of us to contend is that our life, with its tasks and its duties and its cares, becomes monotonous and uneventful. All plain and regular work is apt to lose its thrill. There are, of course, notable and heroic services, there are difficult things which we can brace ourselves up to undertake; but the work we have to do is plain, regular, familiar. Like soldiers, we are not always out on a campaign. For a soldier is not always in the stir and fury of a battle, not always storming a citadel or fighting at close quarters for the flag. He has tame duties which he must go through when no band is playing and the eyes of his countrymen are not following him. So is it with us all. Sometimes we are called by God in this life of ours to do some notable thing—to repel, it may be, some distinct assault of the world, some proposed seduction of our integrity; or we are asked to bear up against some deep disappointment or heavy misfortune. And by the help of

God we keep our feet and hold fast our faith. But we have not to meet such trials every day. We have our tame days when we have simply to go on. And for many people, for people of a warm and enthusiastic temperament, these are the most trying days, as our Lord surely knew when He said, 'He who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in the greatest.' In such days, when we are being asked simply to go on doing our uneventful duties, we need the stir and play of some great thought, of some great faith, to keep the waters of life from growing stale. We need, in fact, such a stroke of the hand of God upon our brow as came to Jesus when He remembered that 'He was come from God, and went to God.'

For what is the spirit of all great and faithful living, the spirit of all true service of God? What in fact on its public side is our Christianity? Is it not simply the application of great and holy ideas to small and obscure tasks?

Is it not to live by high thoughts even in the merest detail of life? Is it not to do daily what we have been doing this very day who sit at a table with the Son of God and leave it with a glowing spirit? Is it not to take up life on the strength of the bread and wine of God? Is it not to carry the glory of the morning in our soul, through the business of the day, through the grey, indifferent afternoon, and to find in the night with its stars at once a challenge and a corroboration of our faith? Is not Christianity simply this: to remember that 'we are come from God and are going to God,' and with that faith in our soul to find no duty too mean to do, no cross too bitter to bear?

It is a rest to our eyes at times to lift them from immediate things and to look far away. And certainly it is as we look beneath the surface of our life, and look beyond the short limit which we feel with awful certainty is not the end, it is as we become aware of the presence of

God which continually is about us, aware of the vast spaces and profound abysses which lie within and about the soul of man, it is when all our thoughts of this great world and of ourselves begin in God and end in God, that we escape the dryness and monotony of a narrow life, and feel within ourselves, like the fluttering of unseen wings, the desire on our part to live above all meanness and self-seeking in this our brief and solemn day.

Jean Paul Richter says that no day should close without a look at the stars. Certainly no life will ever be great and good, no life will continue to bear about with it the atmosphere and quality of Christ, which does not think, in those solitary moments which come to even the busiest of us, of those grave and happy words spoken of our Lord as fortifying Him on the last night He spent with us, fortifying Him for Gethsemane and the Judgment Hall and Calvary—words in which we are told that on the night in which He was betrayed our

Lord reminded Himself that He was come from God, and was going to God, and therein found strength to finish the work which the Father had given Him to do. He knew that 'He was come from God, and went to God.' 'Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief.'

VI

THE MAKING OF FRIENDS

'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.'—S. Luke xxii. 15.

These are days [1] in which we can understand many matters which at the best we had taken on hearsay. For these are days when many things have become necessary to us, of which formerly we thought we had no need. It is an illustration, on the deepest level, of the fact that pain is the great discoverer. It is his liability to pain which makes man a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth.

In these days we know everything by the light of our suffering. The chords of our heart are so tense, that things formerly unsuspected are strong enough

[1] In the depths of the War.

to send a tremor through our nerves, a tremor which faith turns into music.

With regard to the things of our religion, its great words, its vital and established institutions, we see them now with something of the freshness which they must have had for those who first employed them. What a word Faith has become in our day! How we understand it now, for what it always was! How impatient we are of contentious definitions! How satisfied with the speech of the New Testament, 'Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for, a conviction concerning things not seen'! How clearly we see that Faith is above everything else fidelity, loyalty, holding on, standing fast, 'never doubting clouds will break'!

What a possession, too, is the Bible in our time—with its histories, its confessions, its God-possessed persons! What a comfort it is to be able to read, in the hot pressure of this time, of a communion with God which was never broken within

faithful souls by disasters, delays, deaths as poignant as those which we are called upon to endure!

How dear, too—unless something is gone from us—how dear is the Church of Christ, the Church of our fathers, this very Church: which knows us and can meet our need more closely and searchingly than any other! And how thankful to God we are that, with all her failures, She is what She is, and is qualified to become more and more, responding to us with a depth equal to the depth of our necessity!

There is a sentence from Thomas Carlyle which, as I get older, I see more and more reason to repeat and to ponder: 'It was always a serious thing to live.' It was never an easy thing, certainly it was not easy for any long stretch of time, to meet and to survive the various hazards of human experience. To stand up to the bullying processes of nature—lightning, fire, flood, famine, death; to elude or to overcome the hostility of

other groups of human beings; to find answers within the common faith of our own group wherewith to silence or to assuage the terrors of the mind—that is the task of life, and it can never have been easy. 'It was always a serious thing to live.'

We shall never do justice to the various institutions of mankind which have come down to us, or which, having lasted for an era, have passed away, we shall never do justice to that architecture of the human soul which we see in laws and governments with their disciplines and severities, to religion with its schemes of reward and penalty, to the poetry and the music in which man has sought to express himself and to reassure himself in this intractable world, until we recall the bare facts of human existence, the pathos and apparent futility of a human life considered alone. What is society, what is the family, what is the Church, what the common feast and fast, the common hymn and prayer—what are

these and what have they been from the beginning but so many ways by which human beings have come together, have stood by one another to the end, in face of perils, disasters, private fears which no one by himself could endure!

To take an instance: it is the presence of danger which discovers to us our need of friends; and the element of danger is never really absent. And so they have always been accounted wise who, I will not say, sought friends in their day of trouble, but who so ordered their habitual life, who so dealt with their fellows, letting their hearts out to them in acts of consideration and loyalty, that, when the day of trouble came, they were not alone.

One has only to imagine the position of the followers of Jesus at the beginning, to see that these were bound to be friends. The more truly they were Christians, the more closely had they to come together. The common faith and the common fear—these of themselves, even without the

common love, could not but make them one.

If, as Carlyle said, 'it was always a serious thing to live,' it was always a still more serious thing to live, in any age, for ideals, and by a faith and hope which are opposed to the current principles of society. The Church of Christ is built upon this very necessity of the case—that people who hold the same view of life, a view which is not held by the majority, a view which is difficult to hold, and indeed impossible to sustain on purely natural grounds, will come together and hold together in order to strengthen themselves in each other's presence and in the spirit of the community. And the more their view of life is threatened, the more intimately, if God be in the midst of them, will they deal with each other, the more aloof will they stand back from the world.

When two or three people passionately believe something, or see something which the moving crowds do not believe and

do not see, those two or three people, unless they are secretly departing from their own intensity of spirit, will take measures to see one another from time to time. They will encourage one another. They will stand by one another. They will go over again and again the grounds on which they came to have their wonderful view of things. They will read over in each other's hearing and also privately any books or papers which have come down to them from those who had the Faith in other days. The very deadness of the outside world to their way of looking at things will only serve to make their faith more precious. They will train their children in their way of thinking. They will give those children in marriage only to the children of their own society, and so on and on. In fact, given a few people who believe the things which lie at the basis of the New Testament, and the Church of Christ as a Society of Friends becomes a simple necessity.

Clement of Alexandria has preserved a beautiful saying of Jesus which is not found in our gospels. 'The Lord did not say (in Luke xvi. 9) give, or provide, or benefit, or aid, but *make* a friend. And friendship springs, not from a single act of giving, but from unceasing kindliness and from long intercourse.'

'Make a friend.' It was like our Lord to say that. For He also needed friends. People who say that they can do very well without friends are not there and then exhibiting a Christian grace. Jesus, it is not too much to say, could not do without friends. Once upon a time He faced in imagination a day when, as He foresaw, He would be alone. And though He found that He could endure such a day in the pure society of God, still it promised to be a sore day and not one such as He would have chosen. Everywhere, for those who have perception in these matters, there are signs, tender, touching signs, that Jesus made friends. And there, also, He is our Lord

and Master, rebuking our strident and ridiculous claims and ambitions to be self-sufficing and independent. One surely sees in Jesus a shrinking from loneliness, which is the shadow and penalty of independence. He chose twelve men 'to be with Him,' as the record puts it. Of those twelve, for certain reasons He chose three, to be with Him still more intimately. And, according to tradition, there was one of the three who leaned his head upon Jesus' breast. On the night of the Transfiguration, when, we may believe, our Lord took His first long look at the Cross and tested His own resources in God, on that night the three were with Him. And so it was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Not that they shared His agony; not that the sweat of blood stood upon their brow. But they were there, and in some way it helped Him to know that they were there.

'Make a friend,' so Clement of Alexandria quotes Jesus: and once more the

words breathe His very spirit, and express the yearning which He Himself understood, not to be alone in this world. 'Make a friend.' Count no service too exacting which gives you a friend, which secures for you that, when your time comes to be alone, you will not be alone. How he bore with those whose friendship He desired! What patience with their misunderstandings, with their lower point of view! What faith that, if He kept on being Himself, they would one day see Him and see everything! And how it all came to pass, so that when He was taken from them they walked softly all the rest of their life!

For those three hours on Calvary, indeed, He was almost alone; but it was only for those three hours. From that day until this day, Jesus has been making friends. I doubt whether there is a deeper thing to say about our life in this world than just this: that it is all so wonderfully contrived, that it seems to have no other object than to discover to us one

by one our need of friends, on an ever-deepening level of the soul; and to discover to us our need of that final Friendship of God which was the personal Faith of Jesus, His gift and testimony to the world.

VII

JUDAS

'And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples.'

S. John xviii. 2.

The story of the death of our Lord is quite inexhaustible in its moral suggestion, and there is one suggestion which at this moment it offers to my mind. It is this. The evil world which bore down upon the head of Jesus and crucified Him was a thing which could have had no power at all unless it had found its instruments, its human instruments. Judas, Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, the chief priests, the crowd who represented the average public opinion at the moment, —they had all their share in the guilt of Calvary: and what is of greater consequence to us to remember is that each of them was aware that he had his share.

Before each of them the issue stood out quite clearly—either on the one hand to yield, or on the other to refuse. When all is said, there is no evil in the world except such as comes through human hands. It may be difficult for us to trace, as we look upon the victim of any evil thing, how precisely what is before our eyes took place; but we know that if we had the power to see, we should find that everything that is hard, malignant, cruel, has come directly and indirectly through the self-seeking of others.

We can see in the story of our Lord's death how the one tried to shift the issue on to the other; but each one felt that it was an issue, and that he had it in his power to do something to stay the evil process.

I wish to consider the part that Judas played in the tragedy of Christ's death. Judas has become the name for everything that is base and treacherous in the human heart. In Dante's great poem, when the pilgrim of the other

world reaches to the last post of Hell, there in the middle of the frozen ice he finds Lucifer, the ultimate spirit of Evil, and in the central mouth of his three loathsome mouths he sees the body of Judas Iscariot half devoured.

Even those who know very little of their New Testament know the chief incidents in the story of Judas.

We all remember how, a few days before the betrayal, Mary broke her box of spikenard over the feet of Jesus and anointed Him, and how, when the odour of the ointment filled the room, there was a sorrowful silence,—we all remember —the voice of Judas broke the silence and how he said, ' Could not this ointment have been sold ? '

We feel that even then the man who could say such a thing when he said it, has already betrayed the Saviour of the world.

Then we all know the miserable story of his going away by night and holding communications with the enemies of Jesus; and how he came to terms with

them, agreeing for thirty pieces of silver to hand over Jesus.

We are told by S. John, who, we may believe, better than any of the disciples, knew what was passing in our Lord's mind, that from the very beginning Jesus knew at least this possibility in Judas: and presently we shall ask what may have been our Lord's purpose in associating with Himself one in whose heart there lurked such sinister things; though it is enough for us to remember that Christ came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He came to the world because there are Judases in it—because there are those who have it in them to be Judases, but concerning whom Christ never ceased to believe that they had it in them to be something totally different. And so we never read of any action on our Lord's part towards Judas of a kind to depress him or make him feel that he was living under the eye of a critical and censorious Master who

would be glad to find him out indulging himself in his own weakness. On the contrary, we may believe that it was our Lord's hope—indeed, we know that it was His hope at the very end—that His own behaviour towards Judas would have the effect of softening his heart and turning him from his dark purposes.

At the supper on the eve of the betrayal, our Lord took bread and handed a piece of it to Judas, making to Judas in that act the last overture of peace and love, saying in effect to that dark-hearted man, 'I know all that is passing in your mind, but in spite of it all, nay, because of it all, I stretch out My hand to you and give you this token of My readiness to be your friend.'

An action like that must either save or damn a man to whom it is shown. His heart must either break under it, or his heart must become dark and cold. This is always the effect of pure goodness in the world. It is like a magnetic current turned on amongst particles of

iron. They are attracted or repelled. Later we read that Jesus was crucified between two thieves, and His presence there between them softened the heart of the one and hardened the heart of the other. It made one pray and the other curse.

We read that Judas received the sop and went out to have his last conference with the men who were paying him to hand over Jesus.

S. John, who was present, tells us that, as Judas went out, it was night; and though of course we know that it must have been night when they had this evening meal, still the words occurring where they do, 'and it was night,' bring back the whole scene powerfully before our minds. It was the one thing which as an old man S. John recalled—that as Judas in silence made for the door, and as the door opened, he stood framed against the night. A few hours afterwards in the garden of Gethsemane the chief priests and the crowd, guided by

Judas, came to lay hold on Him. We are told, again by S. John, that after our Lord's agony in prayer there was about His face such a majesty that these chief priests fell back astonished and awed. They felt themselves face to face with something which made them pause; and they only recovered from the paralysis of the moment by seeing Judas go forward and kiss our Lord. Then they took hold of Him and bore Him off, ultimately to Calvary.

We know what followed. It is a dreadful thing to have succeeded in evil. One who has succeeded in an evil thing is not at the end of his course: he is at the beginning of it. So it was with Judas. Remorse took hold of him. The thirty pieces of silver blistered his hands. He went back to those who had paid him—as though they could undo what had passed. But they mocked at his display of feeling, and Judas hurried from their presence; whereupon he was overtaken by a tremendous wave of moral

shame, in the madness of which he destroyed himself.

That is the story of Judas. There are one or two questions which that story raises in our minds.

There is the question to which I have alluded, as to why Jesus ever attached a man like Judas to Himself; for we are explicitly told that our Lord was aware of the kind of man Judas was, from the beginning. There must have been something in Judas—something to the eye of Jesus—which made it always a possible thing that *that* and not the more sinister aspect of his life would one day gain the victory. Who knows whether in that wild tragedy of his own death, when with a loud cry he flung himself out of life, who knows whether it was not the higher Judas who next moment stood before the face of God!

And then, being the man he was, why did our Lord allow him to have charge of the money of the little band of disciples? If money was Judas' weakness, why did

our Lord place such a temptation in his way ?

Well, again we must remember that Christ came into the world to save us : not to carry us out of our temptations, not to gloze over the unworthy things in our life ; but to enable us to face ourselves and to overthrow ourselves and to gain the mastery over ourselves in these very particulars of our own personal life where the mastery is most difficult.

I see something wonderful in this : that Jesus, knowing Judas' weakness about money, put the bag into his hand.

There is another question which I cannot pursue because to pursue it would be to touch the whole mystery of our life. It is this. It is quite possible that if Judas had never met Jesus he would have gone through life an average kind of man. He would probably never have been a good man, but he might never have been a bad man in any public and dramatic way. If he had not been brought out into the light as Jesus

brought him out into the light, he might have lived his own mean, shifty life, secret, planning, subtle; but he might also have been moderately successful, appreciated by his fellow-men as a shrewd, capable man of the world, and so he might have died: and yet our Lord by attaching him to His disciples made all that impossible. By choosing Judas He forced the conflict in Judas' breast. He virtually declared that it was better for Judas to act his tragic part and publicly to be overthrown than to slink through life in petty misdemeanours, in an increasing subtlety, and to go out of life a corrupt, indistinct soul, not knowing good from evil. Yes, there in that phrase you have the justification we need for what we often see in life—God choosing a man to occupy a moral eminence for which, as it turns out, he is tragically unfitted: but even as we read this tragedy, we see that this at least has been gained by the man. He has learnt by means of evil that good is best. When Judas passed

out of life, there was one thing he knew. He knew that this is God's world.

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We must not turn the edge of this tragic story by saying to ourselves that Judas was such an outrageously evil character that his experience has no guidance for ourselves. Judas was not a foredoomed villain. He was at the outset an average man with his particular bias, as we all have a particular bias; but he was one who, it would appear, never allowed Christ to deal with the real personal basis of his own life. He associated with Jesus; he must have spoken to Him again and again every day for three years. He was officially interested in the movement; and yet he allowed himself to remain what he was, nay, to go on hardening his heart against Jesus.

Explanations have been offered as to what may have prompted Judas finally to betray Jesus; and although it does not relieve the guilt of Judas, it helps to bring the moral process which corrupted

Judas nearer to ourselves. It has been said—and this was the view which De Quincey held—that Judas in betraying Jesus had no other wish than to force His hand. The idea then would be that Judas was a man who associated with Jesus because the Cause of Christ seemed to promise him a career. He took literally certain words of prophecy which Jesus applied to Himself, and believed that in Jesus he saw the Leader and King of a great national movement; that in this kingdom of the world which Jesus was to inaugurate, he, Judas, would hold a place of power. But the days kept passing. He saw Jesus losing opportunities, he saw Him refusing to exercise His supernatural power, and so he resolved to bring things to a head. He thought that if he could bring Jesus face to face with death, Jesus would then summon His hidden resources and take His power and reign.

The only use I wish to make of such an explanation is that, if it be true, then

it conveys its own grave warning against the various forms in which we also may be serving Christ for some consideration. In that case Judas would be the type of man who is prepared to serve Christ so long as it is convenient, so long as it promotes his prosperity or does nothing to hinder it; but the type of man who, the moment the true nature of the Christian life becomes obvious—that soon or late it is a summons to some form of self-crucifixion—forsakes his Master and abjures his allegiance.

Finally, however, let us not forget that on till the very end our Lord held out a hand to save this man whom He saw sinking from His side. And so, even as we recall his story, let us turn our eyes from the tragedy of it all, and see not merely the fate of Judas, but the outstretched friendly hand of Him whom Judas betrayed.

VIII

THE CASE OF CAIAPHAS

'And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.'—S. John xi. 49, 50.

There is one thing which we must never let pass from our minds in our thoughts about the death of Christ, and about the principles in human nature which brought about that death: it is this. Jesus was put to death by the chief priests of that very religion which He had come to fulfil and make universal. Other kinds of hostile influences were soon involved. A Judas was secured to hand over Jesus to His enemies. False witnesses were suborned to say what they were hired to say. There were men in authority—Herod, Pilate—who were not strong

enough to act upon their own feelings about the case—men who knew very well that Jesus ought to be defended from these ruthless, lying men. The masses of people were ready then as always to take up a cry and to use the occasion to let vent some obscure grievance of their own.

Still, when all is said, and though all of those who had any part in the death of Jesus were responsible for that part, behind them all, heaping up the coals of anger and spite and bitterness, were the representatives of religion; ay, and these the representatives of the loftiest religion which the world had known. Jesus was crucified by the representatives of religion. That is the fact: and here as always it will depend upon what we ourselves are, what we shall make of the fact.

Men of the world who are opposed in the principles of their own life to any moral control in the name of religion, will see in this fact warrant for a position which they would like to take up, namely:

that religions are all alike, and all alike wrong.

Others who may be a little uneasy about their own religious life will welcome this as a corroboration of something they would like to be able to say—that most religious people are hypocrites, and use religion to further their own interests.

Others, again, may deduce from this fact that the chief priests put Christ to death the one conclusion—that it is never good for religion to be able to call in the aid of civil authority; that religion is in its essence a voluntary, personal, spiritual attitude, and that when it is allied with governments and civil powers it becomes too much bound up with the *status quo*, and is tempted to use worldly weapons for its defence and furtherance.

Others, again—and these draw the most profitable lesson from the circumstances—will see in this the everlasting truth, that human nature is human nature even when it assumes the robes of religion; and that the human heart remains capable

of even appalling cruelties and subtleties unless it is in continual subjection to the Holy Spirit.

But whatever be the moral we deduce from the fact, it *is* the fact that they were the priests of religion—and of that very religion whose sacred books are our sacred books—who charged Jesus as being worthy of death, and who did not close an eye, once they had determined on His death, until they saw Him nailed securely to a felon's cross.

There is not a doubt that the most cruel things that have been done in this world have been done in the name of religion. And yet that in itself is no disparagement of religion. It is only a reason why we should see to it that our religion is true, is a religion of holiness and kindness and forgiveness. The reason why religion when it is sincere and passionate leads often to terrible strife and the shedding of blood, is that religion is as deep and precious as life. It is as foolish to say that religion is brought

into contempt because religious people have striven violently for what they held to be vital, as it would be to say that because people everywhere cling to life, and in defence of their own life will even strike death into their enemies, therefore life itself is an evil thing, and the instinct to live a merely barbarous interest, no longer to be justified in wise men.

It is true that there are no quarrels so bitter as those that concern religion. No animosities are so profound and insatiable as those that concern religion. But the conclusion is, not that therefore religion is a bane in human life, but that religion is a matter of such potentiality, of such deep and elementary power either to build up or to cast down, that the human race will never be right, will never have a basis for an abiding brotherhood, and the nations for a bond and ground of peace, until the human race is right there, and at *one* there.

No: the lessons I would draw from

the disquieting fact that they were religious men who put Jesus to death, are lessons which we may apply to ourselves in secret.

For one thing, there are religions and religions. A man may be a very religious man and a very bad man at the same time—for his religion may be a bad religion. And his religion is a bad religion if it justifies him remaining a bad man. If, whilst still considering himself religious, a man may still be a hard man, unforgiving, suspicious, morose, taking his pound of flesh at any cost—such a man may be a religious man, but his religion is a false religion; his is the religion which Caiaphas represented, the religion which crucified Jesus. It is nothing to the point for such a man to protest that he believes soundly in God. Of course he does. But, to quote our Lord's words upon this very issue, 'the devils also believe, and,' He added, '*they* tremble': as though, judged by that test, the devils were rather on the higher level.

An instance will occur to you from our ordinary speech. We often say, usually in extenuation of a man's behaviour, when we do not wish absolutely to condemn the man, or to disapprove of him in general—we often say, 'but he is a very earnest man,' devout even, and sincerely religious. But a man may be earnest and wrong: in which case the more earnest he is, the more wrong he is. A man may be sincerely religious, and sincerely wrong; and the more sincere he is, the more he may be an enemy of the true religion. In fact, a man may be religious and unchristian. He may be like Caiaphas, religious, passionately, even hopelessly religious, and yet like Caiaphas he may feel it his duty to crucify Christ afresh.

The question for us to ask ourselves is not, 'Are we religious men?' We are all religious in the sense that we all have a religion, and none more so than those who declare that they have no religion. We have all a way of looking at life

which inclines to become a fixed and dogmatic attitude, so that we resent any interference with it. We have all a religion—the result within us of birth, early training, environment, teaching, circumstances, moral events in our own life and our attitude towards those events. When one comes to us and says, 'Well, at any rate, I have done my duty,' it is almost certain that he had done something unkind—and that he knows he had done something unkind. He knows that even if he has been defending some law, he has in the very act broken some more beautiful obligation. And so, to justify our action on any issue on the ground that we did it for the sake of our religion and in the name of our religion, is of no more value or sense than were we to say that we did it because we wished to do it. Indeed, that precisely is what we mean. The question for me to ask myself is not, 'Am I a religious man?' For that need only mean, Have I a certain natural temperament? Or, Had I a certain

mental training? The question for me to ask myself is, How do I stand towards the man Christ Jesus? How is the spirit of my life related to His Spirit? To what depth are His purpose and point of view my purpose and point of view? Has my life on the whole His accent? Do I see, however dimly, the great things He saw—the great things in man, in life, in God? These are the searching questions, the questions which pierce our personality to the roots. Let me not soothe myself by declaring that I am a man of religion: for my religion may be my particular form of self-indulgence. Let me see whether I can say, however timidly, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

I am late in coming to Caiaphas: and yet, to those who can weigh the meaning of words and see the implications of them, I have never been away from the case of Caiaphas.

He was the Chief Priest. He was a convinced and seriously religious man.

Religion was the very business of his life. But religion in his mind was bound up with certain things, certain prospects, certain political ambitions—and anything which conflicted with those prospects and ambitions was bound to receive from Caiaphas the most determined opposition. Jesus came under the category of persons who were troublesome and dangerous. We need not paint Caiaphas blacker than his natural colour by suggesting that his hostility and that of the chief priests was provoked in the first instance by our Lord's exposure of the trafficking in sacrifices in the Temple. It is true that the priests made a living—I do not know whether it was what is called a good living—from the sale of doves. And we know that one day in a wave of moral passion our Lord knocked over the tables of the money-changers and made a great many people look ridiculous. For, thank God, there is nothing so easy as satire against religious abuses. So long as people have the salt of humour, a religious tyranny

will never be allowed to go too far. Our Lord had only to bring the two things together—the house of prayer become a den of thieves—to make an entire religious period crumple up.

Well, Caiaphas and the chief priests cannot have liked that.

Then came the raising of Lazarus from the grave, which brought Jesus to the front and gave Him an extraordinary influence over the masses of the people. The chief priests and the rulers hastily met in the house of Caiaphas to consider what was to be done. They were quite at a loss. It was Caiaphas who dropped the first suggestion of dealing with Jesus as they came to deal with Him. To Caiaphas belongs the terrible distinction of having first suggested the death of Christ. And more than that, it was Caiaphas who wrapped up the suggestion in a form of words which enabled men to act upon it, with the feeling not that they were indulging their own passions, but with the feeling that they were

carrying out a great moral principle. Caiaphas is the patron saint of all those more subtle scoundrels who have supplied people with a phrase, a formula which, because it sounds learned or philosophical or religious even, enables them to do something which all the time they know is wrong.

It is true that again and again it is expedient that one man die for the people. It is true that again and again an innocent person has to suffer in order that society may be awakened to some enormity in its habitual life. It is perhaps true that over a million men in the threshold of life had to be killed, and a million homes submerged in grief, if Europe as a moral entity was to survive. It is true that often a ship has to go down at sea, before that place of peril is marked upon a chart. But such a law would never be held as justifying us in bringing suffering upon the innocent. 'It must needs be,' said our Lord, 'that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.'

It is a sin which we may fall very readily into in our day, the sin of quoting an admirable phrase, something which is true in science or in law, or as a general political maxim, or even as a spiritual principle, in justification of some particular action or line of action which *for us* is wrong and nothing but wrong.

Have we no experience of reforms being retarded in the State because they were declared to be in conflict with some law of nature? Have we not heard the words, 'survival of the fittest, the weak must go to the wall,' quoted to bolster up for a few years longer some state of matters which is ripe, and rotten ripe, for change? Have we not heard people speak of 'parental authority' in disparagement of some action which it was proposed the State, acting as a wiser parent, might take in defence of young lives suffering under conditions which had long become intolerable to our moral sense? Men say 'nature has its laws.' Yes, we say, but human nature has its principles.

Illustrations might be multiplied; enough has been said to put us on guard who do not wish to deceive ourselves.

There are words which are true in the sense that, given certain things, others follow by inevitable consequence. *That*, however, does not justify *us* in supplying one of the evil conditions in order that society or the universe may painfully right itself. It is never right to do wrong knowingly. To do evil in order that good may follow, is a maxim which scrupulous people will do well to keep clear of. But to do evil in order that our own interests may be promoted—there, there is no question, no room for casuistry. That is only base. And that was the course which Caiaphas recommended—to kill Christ and thus secure the reputation of being friendly to the Roman power and opposed to popular uprisings. That was the course which Caiaphas recommended, wrapping it up in a moral platitude which he knew to be in the circumstances only a platitude, but

which served the purpose, helping men to deceive themselves who were wishing to deceive themselves. And so, as long as the Church of Christ lasts, the case of Caiaphas will be brought before the minds of men, and they shall be asked to condemn him and to condemn in themselves any likeness or sympathy with the base and sophisticated part which he took in the judicial murder of the Innocent One.

IX

HEROD

'When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing.'—S. Luke xxiii. 8, 9.

There must have been a reason for the silence of Jesus towards Herod; because it was never His manner to repel those who approached Him. And further, there must be some instruction for ourselves in the silence of Jesus here—if we can only get at the facts. Jesus never acted capriciously or carelessly. He acted always in ways which were inevitable to One of His holiness. He acted always as God would have acted, as God still acts, in the circumstances. He was 'God manifested in the flesh.' What, therefore,

we ought to understand from the silence of Jesus here is, that there is a type of character, there is a kind of man, to whom God has meanwhile nothing more to say; that it is possible for us so to behave, so to suppress and distort the movements of God's Spirit within us, that at last God seems to forsake us and to let us go our way. This is the condition which the Scriptures have in view when they speak in one place of men becoming 'dead in trespasses and sins'; and, in another place, of men being 'past feeling.'

None of us, doubtless, have been guilty as Herod was guilty: but it was never because Herod had sinned even to such a depth as he had penetrated, that Jesus turned away from him. No: it was because, having begun by crushing out his own serious thoughts, he had ended by becoming a mere trifler who had no longer the very power to be serious.

We may none of us have gone Herod's way; but Herod is only an extreme and

pronounced example of the working of a law which is always in operation. Let us recall Herod's story and take counsel with ourselves.

. . . . .

The New Testament does no more than hint at the dark deed which lay at the back of Herod's life. He had wrecked the home of his own brother, Philip. For this John the Baptist had rebuked him openly. All honour to that lonely man who, for the sake of God and the decencies of life, withstood to the face a king! But Herod promptly cast John into prison. There, in Macherus, the walls of his prison washed by the waves of the Dead Sea, the good man lay, while Herod seemed to be quite happy, enjoying the fruits of his season—for a season! It is a vexing world we live in, a baffling place even to people like ourselves who believe in God, who believe that in the long run God will vindicate Himself, who believe that 'securus judicat orbis terrarum.'

It is bad enough *with faith*; but without faith, it is quite senseless and brutal. John lay in prison for righteousness' sake, while Herod sat upon his throne!

Time passed, and when next we meet Herod he seems quite comfortable in his own mind. He had got over the inconvenience and disturbance which the Baptist by his outspokenness had raised. We have no doubt that the Baptist's words had troubled the King. There is, after all, a tremendous force in truth. After all, something does happen when one man with the majesty of God in his face confronts another who has committed a crime. And the very fact that Herod cast John into prison proves, I think, that he was afraid of John and that John's words had made him wince. But when we next see Herod, he has got over all that.

Indeed, there we have given the formula for Herod: he was one of those who set themselves to get over the

private scruples and disturbances of their conscience.

It is at a feast that we next see him. It is a vulgar scene. The daughter of Herodias danced before Herod—a thing accounted disgraceful among Oriental women, to dance publicly before males—and the King, dazed with wine and excited in all kinds of low ways, promised her anything she might ask 'even to the half of his kingdom.' The daughter consulted her mother: whereupon the mother, who had never forgiven the Baptist for having called things by their right name, suggested to her to ask the head of John in a charger.

At this point, I would have you observe with what fairness, with what justice, the Bible describes its characters. Like the eye of God Himself, how the Bible sees gleams of light even in the darkest and most unlikely soul! What signs of a better destiny it detects in those characters which it condemns—in Jonah, in King Saul, in Balaam, in Judas even—

so that we hardly know what finally to make of Judas when we remember how he flung away the thirty pieces of silver and rushed out of this life with a white, stricken face! The Bible knows of no souls that are utterly and thoroughly black, but insists always that never did a soul go down into darkness without a struggle, without a protest and an appeal from the side of God. Like God Himself, the Bible has an eye for the bruised reed and for the smoking flax, and for the ineffectual movements of the better spirit in all souls. The daughter of Herodias came back, and asked Herod for the Baptist's head.

It is at this point that we see the fairness, the justice, the kindness even, of the Bible. We read that Herod himself shuddered at the proposal. Now, a moral shudder is a sign of life. For one moment, everything was possible for Herod—even the best. But if a man like Herod, a man with such a life behind him, and so surrounded by companions, will not act

on the spur of the moment, it is already too late. The dark waters through which, for one instant, God had cleft a way, next moment come together again and roll over his soul.

But so long as it lasted, it was a splendid moment. It was one of those moments —and they are always coming to us privately—when we are aware of two courses and we must choose decisively. And we do choose. The incident is closed. and no one knows how we have come out of it. But we carry about the consequences. Our soul is made up of an infinite number of such private decisions and preferences.

Herod, we read, 'was sorry.' He saw quite clearly what he ought to do. If he had only dared be true to himself! If he had only launched out upon that tide of moral protest and power which was straining at all his anchors! If he had only encouraged that might of God which was marching to the deliverance of his spirit, and thrown open the gates, seeing

God and seeing nothing else for the greatness of that light, like one who cried :—

> 'Though I be lost,
> I know what is the better, never fear,
> Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
> . . . I see what I have done
> Entirely now ! Oh, I am proud to feel
> Such torments. . . .
> I, having done my deed, pay too its price,
> God 's in His heaven ! '

But the moment was up ! Next moment, the waters of his Bethesda pool had sunk and the virtue was departed from them. He looked round upon the company, and the old things, the things he had grown accustomed to, mastered him. He saw how much it would mean to alter his ways, or to do anything out of keeping with his previous history. The tide from God which had offered itself to him had ebbed ; to do anything unusual or difficult now, was as idle and ridiculous as some great part we have just been playing in a dream appears to ourselves when we awake.

Herod gave orders that the head of the Baptist should forthwith be brought in a charger. And the thing was done. 'O Lord, wilt Thou be silent for ever!'

We catch a glimpse of Herod once again after this, and before we see him for the last time here in the presence of Jesus.

He had heard of Jesus, of His miracles, and of the influence He was exerting among the people. And, it may be, the old scar stood out for a moment upon Herod's brow. He was sure that it was John the Baptist risen from the dead. So it was, indeed: it *was* John risen again in Jesus. But Herod could not have understood an idea like that, and in any case he was not the man to be moved or made uneasy by any such a subtlety. To him, it was not John; and when he was quite assured about that, his conscience, which had raised its head from the pillow for a moment and looked around, lay down again and went to sleep.

So far as we can judge from the sub-

sequent history, this sleep was 'unto death.' It would seem that his conscience never troubled him further. One whole side of his nature—the side which looks towards God—had died. Things which at one time might have irritated his conscience for a little while, had now lost the power to do even so much. He could rub his old wounds without pain; indeed, with a kind of pride in his own toughness and experience of life. He was 'past feeling.'

One day, in the life of Father Damien, the saintly missionary to the lepers in the South Sea Islands, a pot of boiling water fell on his feet: *and he felt no pain.* By that token he knew that he was a leper, and that the disease had gone so far: that where he felt no pain, in that region he was already dead.

In the case of some men, when they have compelled themselves to act against their own light, they afterwards go down very quickly, even 'greedily,' as the New Testament describes it. They have

lost their self-respect, and they simply let themselves go. Bad as their case is, there is something which I think is worse. A much more difficult and hopeless condition sometimes follows upon the rejection of the overtures of God. One who has for a time been on the point of repentance and of beginning a serious and religious life, but has got over the mood and has fallen back into his old unaspiring ways, or even into some sin against which he had fought for a while and was on guard, such an one, I say, in certain cases from that moment seems to lose the power to be seriously-minded again. He imagines —and he often says this publicly when the subject of religion comes up—that he once made a trial of religion, but that there was nothing in it. Whereas the fact is, religion once made a trial of him, and found that there was nothing in him.

It is not that he becomes the open enemy of religion. He does not feel enough real interest in it even to oppose it strongly. It is simply that he has

discounted all serious views of life even before they are presented to him.

This would seem to have been the case with Herod. He was quite curious to see Jesus. But he had made up his mind that the interview had only to be of the nature of an entertainment to him. He stood before Jesus, without shame, without any stirring of moral delicacy, and put to Jesus some idle and curious questions. But Jesus answered him nothing. Jesus found that He had nothing which He wished to say to Herod.

Upon all this, one or two things rise powerfully to my own lips.

For one thing: it was not because Herod had gone grievously wrong from the moral point of view, that Jesus refused to speak to him. Jesus in His lifetime, and by His Spirit throughout the ages, was and has been the friend of sinners, their only friend.

But the truth is, Jesus came into the world, not to answer men's idle questions, but to deliver us from bad habits and bad

tempers of mind. He came into the world to save us, to do us good; and it is only as our lives become purer under His control, that the real questions about life come to be answered.

Christianity abides in the world, not to indulge the curiosity of the human mind, but to answer some lonely and utter cry.

Finally, the silence of Jesus towards Herod is an extreme and dramatic warning to us all not to trifle with serious things, not to suppress, or distort, or delay the private appeals and suggestions from the Holy Spirit which come, as they already have come, to us all in various ways. Because it is by a secret process of disloyalty to the better moments of our life, by disobedience to some detail of conscience which for a moment has stood out prominently; it is by covering up dishonourably the wounds which God makes in our souls, and not following up our own uneasiness until it takes us to the feet of Christ to recover there our self-respect—it is because of these things,

by turning the edge of God's own instruments, that we harden our hearts, and lose that sensitiveness which makes possible any intercourse between us and Him who is able to save us.

'Some dispositions are closed against Christ for ever; some hearts are hardened: not those of the worst men as they seem to us, but of the cold and the calculating, and the hypocritical, and the selfish, and the sensual; of the man who has no lofty aspirations for himself or others; of the man who, simply beginning and ending life in himself, goes remorselessly on his own career, trampling down all who stand in his way. There is no teachableness in such a man as that, and even Jesus can answer him nothing.'—(Creighton.)

X

PILATE

'And so Pilate, wishing to content the people . . . delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.'—S. Mark xv. 15.

Perhaps it is in this way, and no other, that all the evil in the world has come about. Some one fails to do his part. He knows what he ought to do, what he would even like to do. But he sees that if he acts as he knows he ought to act, his action will get him into trouble, or will arouse feelings in other people which will make it hard for him to continue in the old relations with them. This again will make it impossible for him to carry out some proposal or plan which he has in view, which if carried out is likely to have good consequences such as will outweigh the wrong done by his moment-

ary moral obliquity. It is wrong on his part, he admits, to pay no heed to the uneasiness of his own soul. It is wrong to do wrong, or to permit wrong to be done. But then—so argues one who is using his mind as his accomplice rather than his guide—'life is a big thing' (which is true), meaning 'life is a careless thing' (which is not true, otherwise there would be no need for him to argue these delicate matters with himself), 'and one must weigh his actions, forecasting before he takes a step whether he will not be doing some greater harm later on.' Thus, once again, Satan comes to be transformed into an angel of light; and what to a man's own unsophisticated soul was a miserable moral failure comes, by the prostitution of his reason, to be regarded by himself as wisdom, or statesmanship, or even—may God forgive us!—as Christianity. Pontius Pilate, in fact, is the patron saint of all who in all ages will have peace at any price.

Looking out upon the world at such

a time, for example, as the present time, it may seem to us that things are so mixed up, and have had such a start of us, that it is quite impossible for any one or any society or community to have any real influence upon the general drift. It is quite true that now and again a clear and definite issue presents itself to us. We are called upon to give our word or to take action which is going to have a bearing upon events within a narrow circle. But, unless we take care, there is always the danger that we may avoid saying the proper word or taking the strong action, on the ground that our word or action is certainly going to make immediate trouble, and is most likely to lead to such disturbances of the general habit and expectation that it is doubtful whether it might not be wiser for us, and better in the long run for everybody, were we to hold our peace on a matter on which at one time we really thought we ought to speak, and to do nothing where undoubtedly we at one time were

quite sure that we ought to do something. The sin of Pontius Pilate was the sin of acquiescence. It was not that he did wrong; it was that he did nothing. And I repeat, the world as we have it is simply the immense and unravelled result of the actions and *in*actions of an infinite number of people who have on the whole been, not so much bad people, as simply people who above everything wished to be as free of trouble as possible. Pontius Pilate, to say it again, is the patron saint of those who on a moral issue are prepared to take the line of least resistance. They often call themselves practical men. Now, when more than a certain number of people take the line of least resistance, mankind begins to fall away publicly from God, the garden becomes a wilderness, and the avengers begin to muster in faint clouds upon all horizons, clouds which in the local and immediate blaze of the sun may not be perceived as clouds; but clouds indeed they are, which it only needs a lowering of the

temperature, or the sinking of the sun and the approach of night, to gather over us black and thunderous, having the aspect of doom.

Christ standing before Pilate: that was a situation which was sure to catch the intellectual eye of serious men. *That* was a situation, a contrast which could not but be perceived as having about it something typical and dramatic and enduring. We have only to see them face to face to feel in the depths of our soul what God meant man to be. Of course, like Pilate himself we may juggle with our own inveterate moral instinct. We may whip up reasons upon reasons for refusing to see life so simply as that. But all the time we know we are putting pressure upon ourselves, like an advocate with a desperate brief. There they stand —a kind of snapshot taken by God Himself—and no man can claim to be a man who, looking at the one and the other, does not see his way.

We have the habit of saying, 'Christ

before Pilate.' What really we ought to say is, 'Pilate before Christ.' We feel that Christ can stand there for ever: it is Pilate who must get away. 'When a reviewer offers an article upon "Tennyson as a Fifth-rate Poet," we do not expect much light upon Tennyson, but we shall know all about the writer of the article. We have seen the history of criticism upon Shakespeare, Milton, and the like, with all its contradictions and fluctuations. Now, all through this history Shakespeare and Milton have remained exactly the same!'—(Moulton.)

It is the nearness of Christ to him which enables us to see Pilate. It was the nearness of Christ to him that almost succeeded in enabling Pilate to see himself. When, in the grey afternoon, we begin not to be able to see the letters on the printed page, we draw nearer to the window. Whereupon the letters stand out again in the whiter light. It is a great principle. And so we read that God sent His Son into the world that we

might see ourselves, and become unhappy, and humble, and be saved. 'I came not to send peace, but a sword,' said Jesus; and who has not seen a sword of light flashing into a curtained room, and pointing intensely at something, like the very finger of God! And who has not had some such an experience in the inner chamber of his soul! Let every one keep away from Christ who would rather not have aroused within him some lurking ambition, some suppressed and half-forgotten dream; who would rather not have reopened within him some old sore which was in its day lightly and dishonourably healed!

Nothing could add profitably to the picture of 'Pilate standing before Christ' which the simple narrative of the gospels creates in our mind: and too many words on our part may only tend to blunt the edge of it as a revelation of everything and as a challenge to us one by one, in the region of personal action.

Was Pilate serious? Was he really

impressed by Jesus? When his wife urged him to be careful, and told him of a dream she had had, had that the effect, even for a little while, of making Pilate more uneasy, or even of making him slightly afraid? Or was the whole thing in his view a merely local and troublesome incident in the varied responsibilities of a State official, who has been appointed to the difficult business of holding down a conquered people, and preferably by adroitness, by going round rather than by going through? Was this, for Pilate, the beginning of something, the first stage, the stage of torment and uneasiness, which led on later to what may even have been a total readjustment of his life? Or was it all already discounted in his mind, by his philosophy of things, by his working theory of life? In a word, on the night of that day when he allowed Jesus to be put to death, did Pilate sleep as soundly as usual? Or on that night, when, in the language of Job, he lay down to rest,

saying, 'Surely my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint,' did God, to use the language of the same book, 'scare him with dreams, and terrify him through visions'? Or did Pilate summon wine and the players of instruments and the dance to steep his senses in forgetfulness, returning next morning to his accustomed life, from day to day, and from hand to mouth? Well, we cannot say. It may very well have happened either way. There you have the tragic element of the human soul—I mean, its freedom.

We should, of course, like to believe that no one ever stood near to Christ without being the better for it. And yet we must not presume upon that. If it should turn out to be so—that no one ever stood near to Christ without becoming different and better—it will be one of the added glories of Heaven. But, once again, we must not be sure, or speak as though we knew for certain. We do know that when he first encountered

Jesus, Pilate was simply one of those natural men who are called upon to deal with an enormous number of matters which look small to them, because they do not feel them. We may say, too, that he was one who had settled down to a rather cynical and unenthusiastic view of life.

There is a kind of admiration of Jesus in his behaviour towards Him. And yet it is an admiration of the man, accompanied by something like contempt for all that He stood for. 'I am sent to bear witness to the truth,' said Jesus. 'What is truth?' rejoined the other, with the weariness of a cosmopolitan, with a kind of regret that a simple man should be so enamoured of anything as to put his life in jeopardy for the sake of it. It is the precise tone of one who should say, 'My dear sir, when you are as old as I am, and have seen as much, you will refuse these flights of impulse. You will find that most people have already made up their minds: that few

think: that few care. That one thing is as good as another, and indeed is better than another if it serves your turn': all which, the New Testament declares, is the language and very accent of the Devil.

I say, we can answer none of these questions. It is no part of our business to answer them. The point for us is, that Jesus and Pilate represent two voices which accompany us all throughout our life, from the cradle to the grave. It may even be that they are always facing each other on the stage of our inmost soul. There is the way of a final laughter at man: and there is the way of faith. There is the way of shrugging our shoulders as though saying, 'What does it matter?' and then washing our hands. And there is the way through life which, led by Christ, they take who hold that for man there is but one great misfortune, and that to receive an idea which exercises no influence upon his active life; to see something, to hear something, something

which calls to us—and having seen it or heard it, having acknowledged it, to trample it under our feet in some strong and contradicting deed.

But all Scripture is written for *our* edification; and we are here, not to bemuse our minds over Pilate, but to take precautions for the safety and honour of our own souls.

XI

THE PEOPLE

'And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!'—S. MATTHEW xxi. 8, 9.

'Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified.'—S. MATTHEW xxvii. 22.

IT is perfectly true that, in the last resort, Jesus was put to death by public acclamation. The multitude demanded His death, and then, as always, what the people passionately demand, they shall receive, whether it proves to be for their good or for their evil. At the very end, Pilate left the decision to the mob of people who were surging and clamouring

about him, and they cried out, 'Let Him be crucified.' It was the common people, it was the crowd of anonymous persons, who put the human fate of Jesus beyond all dispute. And yet, although that is so, and although no considerations can clear them of their guilt, Christians in all ages have done well not to place the chief responsibility for the tragedy on Calvary upon the common people, but to fix it upon those men who by virtue of their power, of their prestige, of their traditional authority and influence, and by the abuse of all these, had so wrought upon the ignorance and upon the prejudices and ambitions of the common people that they were ready to do anything: and they did this thing. The religious mind, the general moral sense of mankind, has been well guided to go behind those ignorant yelling people for the true perpetrators of the judicial murder of Jesus; and has fixed the blame upon Judas, and Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate, and the *leaders* of public

opinion. And there, the general moral sense of mankind has discriminated with the very insight and justice of God. It is true that the mob decreed Christ's death. It is true that had the people stood by Jesus, the leaders of opinion would not have dared to lay a finger upon Him. And for that, the mob was guilty: as we are all guilty who permit an evil to be done which we had the power to restrain. And yet once again, the earlier and darker guilt lies upon those men, able, influential, cunning, each looking after his own interest and the interest of his class, who played upon the well-known weaknesses of men in the mass, who whipped up their worst passions, and only ceased heaping coals upon the furnace when they saw that the flames had taken hold and that nothing could now delay the conflagration.

It is true that at the very end they seemed to retire a little into the background; but this rather adds to their

criminality and disgrace. They had lit the fuse which had fired the magazine, and they simply slunk into corners to escape the inevitable danger.

Now, perhaps, under God we are there meant to take heed to ourselves. There are things for which we may, in God's sight, and in view of our own bad conscience, be responsible, even when we can make out a case for ourselves—that really we did not directly do the very thing. We may ourselves have so spoken unguardedly, or let loose a rumour, or have kept silence when we ought to have spoken, that some evil thing has been set agoing, and we are responsible for it, even although we may be shocked at the magnitude it has reached, and are even distressed at the consequences. Most of the evils of this world have come into being, not by the direct intention of any one in particular, but in every case through the co-operation of all of us giving them a push by some word or by some

silence, for which we are responsible; and though at the time it may have seemed a small thing, the word we spoke, or the word we failed to speak, yet in so far as our act could have restrained or diverted or qualified the order of events, we are as responsible for it as though we had with our own hand done the deed. Certainly let us never forget that our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the Cross in obedience to a general movement of public opinion, which, however, did not originate with the common people, but was fomented, engineered, managed, by a few big men in the background who were simply looking after their own interests.

It is not enough to recall the deplorable change in the attitude of the Jerusalem mob — from the 'Hosanna!' to the 'Crucify Him!'; it is not enough to quote that as an illustration of the fickleness and ingratitude of the public, and simply to use it as an argument against democracies, or as a reason for ourselves taking

no part in public affairs. If we take an interest in public affairs merely for the sake of popular approval, then it is a good thing for us to come upon trouble. Whereas, if we set ourselves to do good, for God's sake and because it is right, we shall have our private reward with God, whether the public approve or condemn. But before we malign public opinion on the authority of this classical illustration, it would be well to pause for a moment, and ask ourselves how it came to pass that crowds who could cry 'Hosanna!' on Palm Sunday, could cry 'Crucify Him!' on Good Friday. There is always a reason for things; and though whenever we are dealing with human beings we must be prepared to find, at times, a great consequence arising from a very small cause, *that* only heightens and deepens our responsibility for being the instruments or occasions of those small causes which, falling upon the explosive elements of human nature, may have results beyond our imagination.

On the Sunday (to use our own terms) before the Crucifixion, a crowd went out of Jerusalem to meet Jesus coming in from Bethany. It is difficult, of course, for us to describe the state of mind of a crowd in those far-off days and in social conditions so unlike anything we know. But we shall not be far wrong if we suppose that they were at least not greatly unlike a similar crowd of people in our own day. They were not — or were not exclusively — inhabitants of Jerusalem. They were people from far and near who had come up to the Feast. Idle, ignorant, simple, ready to take up an idea without weighing it, they flocked to the gates of Jerusalem towards Bethany to meet this Jesus about whom a wonderful rumour had begun to circulate. It was declared that He had raised a man from the dead. Now, in a great crowd of people any mood is absolute so long as it lasts. If a crowd is happy, its happiness goes on with leaps and bounds. If panic takes

hold of it, it will lose its reason, and do anything, with the violence and inevitableness of lightning or of a sea that has broken loose.

This crowd was happy: and immediately they began to suppose that this Stranger who was coming was as happy as they were, and was happy for the same reason. They began, even before they saw Him, to clothe Him with their own anticipations, and to impute to Him their own ideas. The rumour began to get about that here at last was the Deliverer from the hateful tyranny of Rome: so that by the time they met Jesus, they had already in their own minds appointed Him their Leader. They stripped themselves of their clothes and threw them on the ground for the ass to tread on which bore their Hero. And, though Jesus gave no encouragement to their infatuation, still, we may well believe, His natural dignity, His fine restraint and self-possession, would seem to the people the corroboration of their hope.

The enemies of Jesus, the few powerful ones who kept an eye upon all popular movements, observed these things and became uneasy.

Then followed the scene in the Temple where Jesus threw out the tables of the money-changers, and described the priests as having made a den of thieves of the house of prayer.

It was a picturesque phrase, simple, profound, final—and the mob took it up and rolled it like a morsel under their tongues. Whereupon the enemies of Jesus became the more alarmed. It was the last thing in the world they desired —that the popular tumult should turn against them. Just here, they bethought themselves of what proved to be a master-stroke. They drew near to Jesus and, assuming a tone of innocence and inquiry, asked Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. If Jesus should say 'No,' they could report Him to the Governor. If Jesus should say 'Yes,' they could leave Him to be dealt with

by a disappointed mob of ignorant people. We know what Christ's answer was: 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' It was an answer from which at first the leaders expected no relief. But as it turned out, it altogether answered their purpose. The mob was in no mood to think or to ponder. All that their mind took in was that Jesus by his answer had seemed to say something in defence of things as they were. He seemed to say that facts are facts, and that the first step towards dealing with them is that we acknowledge them to be there. Indeed, I do not suppose that the crowd even caught so much as that from Jesus. They simply heard Him say that Cæsar had some kind of right; and that was enough for them. He was on the other side. They were done with Him. Their countenances changed. Another kind of passion appeared in them.

We are often more angry with ourselves

for our mistakes than for our sins. The mob was angry with itself for having gone so far; and so they were ready, in order to recover their self-respect, to go even further the other way.

Therefore, when they saw Jesus next day taken about from prison and from judgment, when they saw Him smitten on the face, spat upon, forsaken—and remembered that so recently they had waved branches in procession for Him, hailing Him as their leader, their chagrin, and anger, and vanity so combined and churned up the black fluid of their hearts, that they would tolerate no limit, no restraint or qualification, upon their revenge. 'Let Him be crucified'; and when Pilate tried to sober them, they rejected and despised his warning: 'Let His blood be upon us and upon our children.'

I do not know a more urgent lesson to draw from a study of the part which the crowd played in the death of Jesus, than the necessity of being on guard against

a danger which besets us all as citizens of a democratic State. In the last resort, public opinion decides everything. And yet public opinion may be entirely wrong, or may be very seriously at fault. For public opinion is not even the average opinion of all who go to form the public. Public opinion is liable to moods, to fashions. And these moods may be secured or manufactured by people with interests, or with prejudices which, if the masses of the people understood their bearing, would deprive them of all influence. A few able and powerful persons may by the repeated and insistent pressure of their own point of view create at last a body of opinion which will go to any length.

But the hopeful thing is that this is true on its bright side also. And it is the function of all good people to exercise such an influence upon their immediate circle, and so to champion goodness and justice wherever these are threatened, that there shall ever be working like leaven

in meal, like salt amongst things liable to corruption, a resilient, insistent, compact body of right sentiment, which shall keep our own nation true to its own best history.

XII

THOSE WHO STOOD BY JESUS AT THE LAST

'Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, and His Mother's sister . . . and Mary Magdalene . . . and the disciple . . . whom He loved.'

JOHN xix. 25, 26.

IT may be that our prevailing feeling when we read the story of the last days of our Lord's life, and of the close of that life, will always be a feeling of sadness. Round about the Cross the dark forces predominate. There, evil men seem to have their way; and unless we keep our minds in contact with some deeper and holier way of interpreting the tragedy of Calvary, there is a danger that that tragedy may confirm our worst fears for the future of the world. Here, however, as elsewhere, the truth lies not upon the

surface of things, and is not perceived at a glance: the truth, here as always, lies somewhere nearer the centre, and is perceived by affection and pondering. It will always be possible to quote and recall the incidents which culminated on Calvary, as a proof of the poor chance that goodness seems to have in this world; that in a conflict on the merely physical plane between a soul like that of our blessed Lord, and the passions and prejudices and wrong principles of men which that fine soul of Jesus silently reproved—it will always seem, I say, that in such a meeting and conflict the finer thing must be worsted. But that is true only on the physical plane, and only for a time.

It is the constant appeal and encouragement of our faith that we shall be guided not by these obvious things, things that make a noise in this world, but that we keep our eyes upon quieter things, finer things, things of small bulk; for through these, our faith declares, the

power of God is apt to lie hid but pregnant, ready to leap forth to control the future.

Many a time, doubtless, we have pondered the Cross of Christ. We have considered the part which some sinister figure played in that day's bad business —a Herod, a Pilate, or, earlier, a Judas. We have let out our proper anger at the part they played, and felt, I trust, a proper shame that they should have so smirched the name of man. And, if we did this as it should be done, and took Pilate and Herod and Judas to be not so much men who lived two thousand years ago, but as types of character and tendencies of the human soul which have their counterpart within each one of ourselves; if, in the language of the hymn, we have not forgotten when we were castigating these men that 'our weak self-love and guilty pride, His Pilate and His Judas were'; if we have remembered that it was the Pilate *in us* and the Judas *in us* which, incarnated in the men of those names, brought our Lord to His

death—it has all been good and cannot but have ministered to our own better life.

But it is possible to dwell disproportionately upon the darker aspects and the more sinister figures which gathered round the Cross. It would be to deny the very meaning of the Cross were we to regard it as a crisis of *failure*. In our Lord's own view it was an achievement which, as He foresaw more than once, could He but compass it, would do nothing less than settle the destiny of man. And we have fallen from His spirit and have been guilty of believing in that which is *seen*, against the evidence of that which is not seen, if we allow ourselves to put the emphasis upon the sadness and the loneliness and the defeat of the Cross.

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Let us not, for example, forget that even before that angry crowd dispersed, having achieved its purpose, already there were those amongst them who were beating their breast, asking, 'What next?'

Let us not forget that already before the soldiers, whose task it had been to carry out the details of the Crucifixion, separated, the officer in command declared, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.' And let us not forget, though all round about the Cross was this howling, angry, reckless mob, worked up to an undiscriminating passion by subtle leaders who had their own ends to serve, that nearer to the Cross itself, round about it, their eyes almost level with His eyes, stood a little group of friends who saw nothing but the dear figure of Jesus, and heard nothing but His last words, and felt nothing but the depth and tumult of their own hearts.

'There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, and His Mother's sister . . . and Mary Magdalene . . . and the disciple . . . whom He loved.' That is to say, our Lord was not alone when He died; and He has never been alone since. It is something to think about, that our Lord's last hour was not an hour of utter loneliness; that four people who loved Him deeply were

round about Him to the end and heard His last words.

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It is perhaps a quiet and fine ambition, which ought to sustain us in our daily life in the world, that long before our lives are completed there shall have been drawn towards us, and this by the steady force of our habitual life, a small group of friends for whom life has become a fuller, better thing because they knew us, for whom life will become a deeper and holier thing because, having known us, we are no longer with them.

None of us can live long or stand up to life, especially in its later complexities, unless we have some ambition, some hope, the prospect of some sure result. And I do not know where to find a more penetrating ambition, or one with such power to urge us out of our indolence, or to restrain any lurking violence of our own nature, than the ambition or hope that there shall be in this world a little group to whom we shall always mean

something good. Next to the supreme concern — namely, that behind everything, away beneath the surface, we have friendship and free communion with our Father in Heaven—there ought to be in every heart a firm purpose that we shall so have dealt and shall so deal with some little group, that in any possible crisis they also in body or in spirit shall be with us to the end and at the end.

Of those four who gathered round the Cross of Jesus, we might say without any affectation or unreality that there were three groups. In one group we place His Mother and His Mother's sister—those of His own blood, that is to say, who were joined to Him and He to them by the mysterious tie of kindred. In another group stands Mary Magdalene, whose life had all been changed, and that suddenly, when one day our Lord spoke to her. And the third group consists here of John, the disciple whom He loved. At the moment, I think of John as representing the finer natures, the

more tender souls, who are drawn to Jesus because of their very tenderness, because of a deep sympathy in their points of view.

Well, these three groups stood by the Cross of Jesus as He died, so that He was not alone. He was rich in His death.

The other thing that I want to say, and it *completes* what I want to say, is that it is still the death of Jesus, it is still Jesus dying as He died, not in weakness, but dying in obedience to love, in obedience to His faith in God, in sure confidence that it was not in vain, in an unquestioning belief in God's control of Him and of all who through Him commit themselves,—it is still Jesus, and Jesus in that supreme and significant hour of His life, namely His death, who draws to Himself all the affection and the pathos that gather round about these three groups of human souls. Children torn from their parents, as they bow before the Cross of Christ, their hearts sinking down and down into communion

with this scene in which a Mother is separated from her Son, will feel on to the end of time that this is the true home of their spirit. This is the place where their memories are refreshed, where all the dignity of their grief comes back again. Here they are saved from becoming common or forgetful: here, too, they are saved from bitterness. If Mary had grace given to her not to be bitter, and if our Lord, knowing what was happening, did not rebel—well, we who are in some such a case must baptize ourselves daily by imagination and faith in *their* hour of sacrifice, that we may rise with them into their wonderful peace.

So likewise will it be, and so ought it to be, on until the end of time, with all who shall ever be led into such experiences as gave the Magdalene her reason for clinging to the Cross of Christ.

And so will it be with all those finer spirits who seem to us to find their representative in S. John—those for whom this world has never been enough and

never will be enough; those who cannot but ponder the human fate; those who cannot but think and imagine and look forward; those who cannot but have their fears, though they hasten to steady themselves, in every hour of fear, by thinking of this One who was not afraid; —of all of whom, I repeat, it seems to me, S. John is here the type. For, Christ —the whole of Christ, His ministry, His sufferings, His words, His deeds, His death, faced in full consciousness of the coming pain, but in a still deeper consciousness of the surrounding and succeeding joy, and of the inevitable victory of that Kingdom of the Spirit thereby founded in this world—Christ, surely, is the vindicator of all who in this world have tender hearts, and who believe that tenderness is the strait gate and the narrow way that leadeth unto life.

We do well to let every aspect of the Cross of Christ have its proper weight and direction for us. We do well to take to ourselves every kind of lesson

which unbidden, sometimes most suddenly perceived for the first time, falls upon our spirits when reverence has put the proper strain upon them. Above all, we do well to try to build into our own life whatever comes home to us bringing a fresh impulse or emotion. And this is one aspect of the undying story which has come home to myself as for the first time, indicating to myself a task and ambition and secret purpose which might well inform and order my entire behaviour henceforward ;—that as our Lord so lived that, before the end and at the end, there gathered round about Him, in sheer love, this one and that one in whom He had let loose a deep affection making life intolerable when He should depart, and tolerable thereafter only in the blessed memory of Him and communion with Him risen from the dead, even so *I* might try to live, and *you* might try to live, so that our own kindred should love us, and so that some one like Mary Magdalene might say about us that our friendship,

our kindness, our forgiveness it may be, had opened a door of new life for him or her; so that some one or more than one of the order of S. John, some one of the great company who, in every age doubtless, and in this age most certainly, are about us, thoughtful, liable to misgivings, affectionate, repulsed by the world, not successful according to the standards of men, delicate, silent, proud though without sin, may feel the stronger because we are alive and active in the world, and, even should we be taken from them, will never become bitter, remembering that we were here for a time.

XIII

THE SWORD THAT PIERCED HIS MOTHER'S HEART

'He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy Mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.'
S. John xix. 26, 27.

Nothing could be more powerful, nothing better fitted to fill our hearts with tenderness, than those opening words—'Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother.'

We only need to have imagination and common human feeling, to be touched by words like those. Any mother watching any son dying is affecting enough. But here we have a mother watching her Son dying at the age of thirty-three! And He is dying the death of a criminal, she herself being almost the only one in the world who knows Him in any deep way

—who knows how good He is, how contrary to all justice is this shameful death. Mary had other sons, but they were not like this one. In a sense, this one had cost her more than all the others —from the first, until now at the last. God had given Him to her in a mystery. She had borne Him amongst strangers, in a stable—away from all the pieties of home. She had borne Him, too, not understanding many things with regard to Him, and being unable to speak about them: though, thank God! she had a husband who made it as easy for her as his simple love for her could make it. Still, it had been a great trial—like the first approach of that sword which here at the Cross pierced her heart.

And then Jesus was her first child. That mysterious and holy world of motherhood had come upon her with Jesus.

She had other children, other sons, but, I repeat, they were none of them like Jesus. He was always different from them and from other people's children.

He was a loving and dutiful child. She had the true love of His heart: and yet, there was not a moment of her life when she was not aware that she had not the whole of His heart. There was always something in Jesus more than she could understand. He was always beyond her. And part of the cost which Jesus had been to her was just that: that she had to make up her mind that she could never hope to be everything to Him that she wanted to be, that in certain great matters she would not be able to help Him, that the greater part of His life would be spent in loneliness; that she would be able only to look on, to follow Him at a distance, so to speak; to be there, to be near by, if ever He should seem to need her—as now when He had come to die!

It is the children that cost us most whom we most love. It was not otherwise with Mary and her holy Son. Once again, she had other sons, but they were different. They were average children,

with the usual faculties, the usual outlook upon life.

Sometimes, looking at our children and thinking of them, we may see that some of them, simply because they have nothing very singular about them, are almost sure to pass through life without any very violent sorrow. They will keep to even courses. They have the usual qualifications for a usual career. But there may be one of our children who, we see, is different. He may have a delicate body, some weakness which will always separate him from others of his years. Or he may show early signs of an unusual fineness of feeling; or he may be a child of great imagination; or he may from a very early time give evidence of a sensitive moral nature, one who endures almost intolerable distress of mind when it comes home to him that he has done anything wrong. Such children there are, predestined to a certain distinction and solitude in this world, whose way through life is sure to be hard. No doubt, they

will have the compensations which come to every exalted nature, the heights and the depths;—but they will have the sorrows, and chiefly this, that they will have something of that loneliness, that friendlessness, which, to take an instance, Shakespeare bestows upon all his *Kings*.

One thing is sure: it is towards children of this kind—children who are different from ordinary children, who have some delicateness of the body or of the spirit, something which will always set them apart—it is towards these that a parent's love goes out most fully. Indeed, it is in relationship to such a child that a parent—and especially a mother—discovers what her love truly is, and how wisely an ancient father of the Church described it when he said: '*Caritas est passio*'—love is an agony.

I need not recall—for you must be familiar with them—the many passages in the Gospels where we see very plainly that whilst Jesus was everything to His Mother that a son should be, there was

always something in Him which that Mother could not lay hold of. Not that Mary ever complained. She always seemed to know that it must be so; that it was through no defect in her Son, but through her own natural limitation, that Jesus always went beyond her, and seemed to live His own characteristic life in a region to which by the very nature of the case she must remain a stranger. But from the first she understood her part, and never presumed. She seemed to know from the very first days that she would best fulfil all that she could do for her mysterious Son—who, notwithstanding the mystery, was still her true Son—by keeping near to Him, by always believing in Him; and if He should ever seem to need such help as a loving woman might give, she would in one moment be at His side—even as now when He hung upon the Cross. 'Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother': she who had leaned over Him when as a babe he slept,

feeling in those young days the beginnings of some mysterious dealings of God with herself; she who, we doubt not, many a time had wept, as she bent over His cradle, wondering what might be in store for Him and for herself,—felt once again the same conflict of love and awe, the same straining at the cords of her heart, as she gazed upon Him dying.

'When Jesus therefore saw His Mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy Mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.'

It was part of the awful cruelty of death by crucifixion, that the dying man, in many cases, retained consciousness for some hours—hours of intolerable pain, especially of thirst. It was a slow death, and sometimes it had to be hastened and driven home—as in the case of the two thieves, whose legs had to be broken. But in the case of Jesus we are spared

that added horror, as His mother was spared it. There was no need to break His legs—to bring on death. He died, not of the physical pain, but, as our fathers believed, of a broken heart. When He knew that all things had been accomplished by Him, He let something go within Him—He by an act of His own blessed will released His will and died. As He felt the end approaching, His eyes sought His Mother and rested upon her standing there. It was then that He spake—commending her to John, and John to her. Even here, there is in His words that tone of distance which, however we may misunderstand it, Mary did not misunderstand. He does not say —(as a great German preacher observes)— 'My poor dear mother.' He said, 'Woman.' It is not to be understood by us except by believing that Jesus was dealing with some huge matter between Himself and God. But there is no coldness in the word, as we might think. In His case it is the word of One who is dealing at the

moment with tremendous things, who nevertheless bends His heart towards a solitary human being. It is human love chastened and made severe by the Majesty of Death.

'Woman, behold thy son'; 'Son, behold thy Mother.' It was not that Mary would have been without a home, if John had not taken her to his home. She had, as we have said, other sons, and they were honest men—though like others they did not understand Jesus until afterwards. They would have taken her home, and provided for her. But their home would have been no home for Mary—in those days, and after what had happened. To provide a home for any one is to do something more and something other than merely to provide for that one's bodily necessities. You cannot provide a home for any one unless you and he or you and she can speak together in harmony upon the deepest and the dearest things. Mary's other sons could have supported her;

but, as they did not yet believe on Jesus, they could not comfort her, they could not give her a home. They might have been kind and dutiful and considerate; but how could they have given Mary a home when they could not speak naturally or listen to Mary speaking of her first-born Child who had been taken away!

For that is no home where the deepest and dearest things may not be laid open, where hearts cannot unbend naturally and freely, and draw near to one another and to God by speaking upon occasion of holy and tender things.

No: at that moment there was only one in all the world who could make a home for Mary, now that Joseph the husband of her youth was gone—and he the disciple to whom Jesus commended her! For, once more, only they are at home with one another in this wide-stretching world who have something in common, something too of such a kind that it is fitted to make them one with one another and with God.

And so we may well believe that it was for Mary His Mother's sake that Jesus from the Cross counselled her to make her home with his beloved disciple. It was for her sake, that she might have somewhere to weep, secure from unfriendly or unbelieving eyes. That she might have some one to speak to about what lay most closely to her heart. That she might be able to speak or to be silent —always knowing that this man, who also had known her Son in some way as she knew Him, would know what was passing in her mind. In short, it was that she might have indeed a home, a place where she was understood, and where the things she held most dear were respected, that Jesus commended her to John.

But it was not for His Mother's sake only; it was for the sake of John also. It is a great question with scholars, and with all exact and serious students of the New Testament—where did John get that intimate knowledge of Jesus

which he reveals in all his writings? If we read the three Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—we shall find that John as he is described there knew little more about Jesus than did the others, certainly not more to all appearance than did Peter and James. We find that he, too, entertained the most worldly ideas as to what Jesus had come into the world to do. We find him asking Jesus on one occasion to give him a place at the right hand of His throne—supposing that Jesus was about to found a kingdom of this world. We find him urging Jesus on another occasion to draw down fire from heaven and consume some people in a Samaritan village who had treated Jesus with discourtesy. That last incident shows indeed fidelity of a kind, but it is at best the fine fidelity of a faithful dog. Such was John almost up to the day when Jesus died. And yet that same John, that son of thunder, wrote—it may be—our fourth Gospel. In that case, this same John writes the third chapter of that

Gospel, telling with insight and feeling the story of Nicodemus, and of the woman at the well. That same John alone of the evangelists has the fine soul to see the beauty of such an obscure disciple as Andrew; he alone sees Nathaniel, and tells us the most precious things about Thomas — how in the presence of Jesus his angry doubts had passed away.

Now, how did all this happen? How came it to pass that a man with his purely worldly conception of Jesus and of the Kingdom of Heaven, with his fiery temper too, became the sweet and beautiful soul, tender as the tenderest woman, innocent like the smallest child, who wrote our fourth Gospel, and the Epistles which bear his name?

But may not the solution lie here: 'From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home'? Mary, the Mother of Jesus, made her home with him! It needs only a little imagination, only a little understanding of the human heart,

to fill in all the rest. What would these two speak about when they were alone? How much, too, they would be alone! as people love to be who have passed together through some great experience, as people draw near to one another who believe something which the world denies or which the world does not know. Yes, that was it. Mary would speak of her Son. She would open out her heart upon matters on which she had been silent for years. She would pour out those things—incidents, and her own thoughts about them—which, as we read, she used to note and 'ponder in her heart.' They would sit together in the sun talking of the things of God! She would tell him many things which no other could have known. And John would fit these into what he himself had seen. And slowly the blessed image of Jesus, no longer man for John but merged in God, would form itself upon his soul. He would see how lonely, too, the Saviour of men had been all the time! How quiet He had been

about His own sorrows! How silent about the great and holy business of His life! And John would remember, too, how he himself had misunderstood Jesus, how he also must have given Him pain.

Until one day John's heart, thinking of all these things and of himself, actually broke, and a flood of tears poured over his whole nature, cleansing it, washing it, softening the soil of his soul for ever; filling him with a great sob of gratitude to Christ and grief over himself which made a new man of him; as it alone, certainly as it best of all, can make new men of us, in these dry and difficult days of the spirit.

XIV

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, A LIFE OF GRATITUDE

'Who died for us.'—1 THESSALONIANS v. 10.

WHATEVER we may make of it, there is no doubt whatever that it was that sentiment, and none other, on which the Christian Church was launched upon the world. The Church of the beginning floated out for that long voyage whose first haven is the City of God, upon a sun-lit sea of gratitude to Christ. I hope I may be wrong in what I am going to say. I hope it may be only my partial view; or the reflection of a mood; or, if it be true, that it is only a passing fashion of thought, due to our absorption for a long time now in more material things, and that this haste and superficiality have affected the life of the Church itself.

Whatever be the explanation and history of the fact, the fact it is that this sentiment of sheer and even abandoned gratitude to Jesus Christ, for something so precious and immense that sober speech fails to express it all and those who are aware of it must sing and leap for joy, as at the beginning—that this has in great measure died down. It is probably true of most of us that if we were challenged with having now no gratitude to Christ, we should immediately, or after a little reflection, resent the charge. We should say 'Nonsense!' and proceed to declare that if Christ and all that He has come to stand for were withdrawn from us, we should stand in a shivered universe. We should probably go on to admit that perhaps we did not nowadays show our feelings so frankly as they did in early days; that nowadays we are more reticent all round; that there are differences of race; that we are a Northern people, shy and rather critical of emotional display. But to suggest that we no

longer adore Christ and commit to Him alone the entire business between our souls and God, we declare with some warmth to be simply not true. Once again, we might go on to admit that perhaps we were not without blame, and to agree that a sentiment which is continually held down, which is never given even a festive and hearty indulgence, is a sentiment which will die. But that our heart had fallen away from its final love of Christ, still less had turned against Him, is something which it would alarm and vex us to have suggested to us. And yet is there not some truth in it? We are quite sure as we read our New Testament that those good people with whom Christ found His first welcome lived each day in a kind of transport of gratitude to Him for something He had done for them. And it will not do for us to say that those were simpler times when people had not our complicated conditions of life. In essential things life has always been very much the same.

They also had their tasks, their sorrows, their blows from the hand of chance. They had their feelings, and they were not different from ours. And yet we are quite sure that, as each day dawned for those people, the first thought that came to them was to remember their wonderful happiness, and their sense of a most blessed obligation to Jesus Christ: so that, as some one actually said about them, they were like people coming home from a wedding. If you had asked those happy folk what it was that was making them so bright, they would have answered with all their soul in their words, 'Christ died for us.'

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Now, I want to believe that, though of course we are not without blame if our hearts have grown cold, where Christian people have lost this particular happiness over Christ's death on their behalf, it has happened through ignorance or misunderstanding. At the moment there is just one thing in my mind on

the point. Let me, in few words, deal with it.

There is no doubt whatever that the doctrine of the influence *upon God* of the Passion and Death of Jesus, in the case of many people who wish to conduct their lives in a Christian way, has lost its direct and happy meaning. And there is equally no doubt that the doctrine has often been presented to the moral intelligence of people in a way which made it unreal, untrue, certainly unattractive and unmoving. Now, whatever be the way to describe what Christ has done for us in laying down His life with all the poignancy of Gethsemane and Calvary, it must be some way that moves us to the quick to tell it and moves us to the quick to hear it told. And this moving influence is not to be thought of as a merely sentimental influence—such as any sad story may have upon us. Whatever else our Lord meant when He rebuked those kind women who wept to see Him stumble beneath the Cross, He

certainly meant to say to them that He had no wish for people merely to be sad or sentimental over Him: that what they were seeing in Him at the moment was not a display of weakness, but a victorious deed. The story of the death of Jesus moved those who were properly moved, not to sorrow but to gladness; not to sympathy with Him but to contrition towards God: not to feelings so much as to a new life.

But, I was saying there is a way of putting to our minds what Christ did for us in dying, which not only does not move us but which may even move us the wrong way—making us resent something about it as being unjust and dishonouring to God indeed.

For example, we must never give the idea that God refused to have any friendly dealings with human beings until some punishment had been borne by somebody —by ourselves or by Some One who could conceivably suffer as much in His solitary person as all the people who

have ever lived and who will ever live ought to have suffered and ought to suffer. That we had offended God, and that He in consequence stood upon His dignity, so to speak, and would not be appeased until the uttermost farthing of our moral indebtedness had been paid in blood and pain; that God did not care whose blood and pain it was, so long as the quality and amount of it were right; and that it was just there that Christ, giving of His pure blood, and enduring an infinite agony, settled for us our account with God.

That, I say, was and is a way of putting the Passion of Christ which is nothing but harmful. It misrepresents God, making of Him something which we should shrink from in ourselves. And besides, the whole transaction so described is unjust and intolerable to our moral sense. To give the idea that Christ was dragged to the altar and killed to appease the wrath of God, is to give countenance to some of the darkest superstitions of the

human race—to the self-torturings of Egyptian anchorites, and to the incredible horrors of the Aztecs and Incas of Mexico and Peru. But the fact is, it is not true. It is not Christian at all. Christ was not dragged to any altar. He freely gave Himself up to death for us all. And it was not to appease God, in that hard and juridical sense, that He laid down His life. It was as the Son of God, as the pure expression and perfect image of God, that He intervened in the inexorable moral machinery of life, interrupting a fell and impending doom.

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I cannot explain it all: of course not. But even I can clear the great transaction of any injustice, and could, were it not presumptuous, vindicate God.

How, then, shall we state this value to us of the Passion of Christ, so that we may feel about it what they have felt in all ages in whose hearts it has let loose such songs as gave them the victory over life and death to sing? I shall say

this only. Christ gave Himself for us to bring us to God. In order to do that, He had to live, and had to live just where He chose to live. The life He chose led in His circumstances to His death. Death was the price He had to pay to live as He chose for our sakes to live. But all the way it was for us; it was for the human hope, for the human prospect in God, that He, Jesus, lived and died.

Until He came, man was only what he was. Since Christ has come, man is different, as God sees him, even though he be the same in his own eyes. Since Christ came, since Christ took up our life, since Christ died rather than concede one shade in the brightness of His Great Vision of man restored to God,—since then, the final truth, for us Christians the only truth and description of us men and women however we may have lived and played the fool, is this, that we belong to a race of beings for whom Christ thought it worth while to die!

It is all, of course, a great mystery. But

it is not a curiosity. Still less is it an offence to our moral instinct. What we say is, that we now do not accept as the final truth about us the verdict of history, which is wholly against us. We do not accept even our own verdict—the verdict of our own miserable ups and downs, our sinkings into baseness and our subsequent beatings of the breast—we do not accept all that as the final truth about us. The one thing we want to think when we are thinking about ourselves, and thinking also about our precarious-looking appearance in this great whirling world, devastated as we are by fortunes, and chances, and in the end being the apparent victims of decay and death—the one thing we want to think about ourselves is, that for us, that is for us and the like of us, Jesus Christ thought it good to die!

XV

THE CROSS, NOT THE CRUCIFIX

'We preach Christ crucified.'—1 Corinthians i. 23.

We read that 'there was darkness over the whole earth from the sixth hour to the ninth, and at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost.' There was a darkness, that is to say, round about the Cross, while Jesus was dying. Surely there was a meaning in that. It meant surely, and still means, that there was and there is about the agony of the Son of Man a great silence and mystery. It means that something was taking place there which was not wholly to be made plain. It signifies certainly this, that the meaning of it all was never to be understood by idle passers-by, or by those who were content to remain at a distance. It means that

only they who were very near the Cross, and who themselves were looking up out of their own breaking heart, should ever see the face of Christ, and hear those words which broke from His Agony like sobs.

It is in this way that the Saints have understood the darkness round about the Cross. It was fitting, they perceived, that it should be dark. It was fitting that men should be brought into the attitude of reverence and gentleness as they drew near to the Cross whereon the Saviour of the world was stretched.

Well, the Cross is still not shrouded indeed in darkness, but made solemn by the mystery which encircles it. It would seem as though God intended to keep down mere human presumptuousness concerning the true necessity for the Passion of His Holy Son. The Cross of Christ is a place where God intends the darkness to bring a hush over the human spirit. It is a place not for seeing but for believing; it is a place not for discussion but

for prayer. It is a place not for speaking but for listening; for listening to the things which we ourselves are aware of as often as we are quite alone—that is to say, alone with God.

Rude and careless souls have no insight into the Cross, and get no good from it; just as you will not hear fine music if you yourselves are making a noise, or see the stars if your eyes are fixed upon the ground. Here as elsewhere, before this mystery as before every mysterious appointment in this life of ours, light comes to us not so much by our searching for it, not at all by our angrily demanding it, but only by bowing our heads and submitting ourselves without reserve to God our Father.

Let us once more draw near to the Cross of the Son of Man. Let us recall to our own minds, praying that the Holy Spirit may take them down into the depths of our life, one or two meanings which stand out clearly from the great mystery of our Lord's Passion.

The simplest meaning which the Cross of Christ has for us is that there we have the perfect example. The example of what? of unstinted obedience to the will of God. In the sufferings of Jesus, in the increasing loneliness of His life, in the cruelties at the hands of men which He endured, and in the ignominious death which the world imposed upon Him—in all this, we have an Illustration of the trials and pains which are apt to fall upon the man who brings to his day and generation a vision of Holiness and Love which rebukes the reigning temper of the time. We are warned, so that we may be prepared for it, that the path of personal fidelity to God is no easy road, but one on which it is more than likely we shall meet the opposition and torment of the world. In the sufferings and death of Jesus, if we may put it so, God is trying to shake off men from obedience to Him if they will be shaken off. The Cross of Christ is God's test of all our professions, and by the light of it we may all learn

what is the real quality of our life, the real depth and purity of our motives. The Cross of Christ is there at the entrance of the Kingdom of God to tell us all that if we are afraid of trouble, afraid of being taken seriously, afraid of being asked to do more than we would have chosen, we should go no further; that if we would like to turn back, we had better turn back at once. The Cross, from this point of view, is Christ's way of disheartening us if we will be disheartened. But if we will not be disheartened, if we will not be frightened out of our holy resolutions by any prospect of discomfort or pain, then the Cross from being a challenge to us becomes a power within us. Any trial in this life of ours which does not break us down, adds to our moral strength. When we rise to any challenge, we actually take into our souls the very power which made the challenge formidable. Every Cross that you are *not* afraid of, bestows upon you an access of power equal to the power by which you triumphed

over your natural fear. This is the meaning of the New Testament phrase—'that the Cross becomes the *power* of God' to those who believe, to those who are not afraid.

This leads me on to the second insight into the meaning of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have said that it is the perfect example and illustration of the spirit and the sufferings of a holy and obedient will. I now go on to say that an example is never merely an example. What makes an example an example is that it is always more than an example. An example is also a power. And so we say 'example is better than precept.' Why is example better than precept? Why is it a surer way of influencing another, to *shew* him the way than merely to *tell* him the way? The reason is this. An example is a living contagious thing, which emits power.

You know that you cannot draw near to a good man, you cannot even recall him to your mind, without feeling him

helping you. Something seems to come out from him and to take possession of you. His strength comes to the rescue of your weakness, so that, so long as he is near you, he is with you, nay, he is in you as a Power enabling you to achieve the very thing which he had awakened as an ambition in your spirit. Let no one speak hastily and without gratitude to God for this blessed influence of the Cross of Christ. Let no one use the tone of contempt or disparagement in speaking of the 'mere example' of Christ in the hour of His Passion. There is no such thing as a 'mere example'; an example is not even an example unless it has become more than an example, unless it has become a power. An example is not even an example until it has become an inspiration. Now, all this is true, though it is short of the whole truth, of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross of Christ cannot be for one moment a mere example or illustration, without in that very moment becoming more than

an example. It becomes a power, a reinforcement, a summons. It lets loose some divine Power upon us, and it awakens some divine Power within us. For that is really what always happens when we follow any example in this world. Something, a spirit, comes out from the example, and something, a spirit, rises up from the depths of our soul to meet it; and our happy obedience is just the communion of these two, 'the deep calling unto the deep.' And that may be the meaning of that other New Testament phrase applied to the Cross of Christ, namely, that it is '*the wisdom of God*.' What could any one have intended to say who called the Cross the wisdom of God? I think just this. The world or men naturally suppose that the way to get people to do things is to bribe them to do them. They will do what is easy, what is pleasant, what suits them. They will do anything which ministers to their pride or to their interest; in fact, they will do anything which is in a line with

their own general habit of self-seeking. Such is the wisdom of the world. Such is what the world sees in the heart of man. But what is the wisdom of God? Just the very opposite of all that. 'The Cross' is the wisdom of God. It is the tremendous honour which God has put upon us, it is the amazing insight of God into the human heart, an insight which Christ accepted and made the basis of His own lonely achievement for our salvation—that at the last, the proper appeal to man was not the appeal to his weakness, but the appeal to some obscure integrity which was still there or still capable of being there in his heart: that the appeal which finally would *fetch* man (as we say) was not the appeal to his love of ease, but to his love of hardness; not to his self-interest, but to his self-sacrifice; that at the last God would be able to find men, to touch them, to appeal to them, to get them, not by setting before them an easy way, but by setting before them a hard way, even such a way as led through

Gethsemane to the Cross of Calvary and the apparent contradiction of every hope, the apparent blotting out of every light. To the wisdom of the world, which says that the way to get men is to bribe them, to pander to their apparent tastes, to please them, to flatter them, to agree with them and give them what they want, —the wisdom of God replies that the way to get men, to get at the man in men, is to show them, as we have in the Passion of Christ, something so hard to achieve that it seems for ever beyond us, and yet something which, just because it once happened in human flesh, we know is something which belongs to our true style and final personality. 'Behold,' says the great disciple, 'behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.' Behold the insight of God, the charity of God, to believe that away down in these pitiful hearts of ours; away down beneath all our frivolities and lusts; away down below all our sensualities;

away down below all our pettiness, there was something in us or there might come back into us, at a certain kind of challenge, something, which would recognise in the Passion of Jesus Christ its own pure essence, its own true and only home.

We are all of us, each in our own way and with our own delusions and illusions, seeking happiness. And we are right in seeking happiness. No system of conduct, no religious discipline, will endure for more than a time which tries to rob man of his inheritance of joy. We cannot conceive God otherwise than as wishing us to be happy. But the happiness of any creature always depends upon the nature of that creature. The nature of man is this : he is made to live in obedience to voices which come to him from the holiest crisis of history, and from the holiest moment of his own life. And such being his nature, man is at peace only in the fulfilment of it. A man is himself, a man has come to the knowledge of himself, who in the course of his

journey through this world has met right in the middle of his way the Cross of the Son of Man—that Cross on which God and man find one another. We have come to ourselves and have entered definitely upon the saving Way, when, at the vision of the Son of Man in sacrifice, the Holy Spirit is let loose upon us and a spirit equal to it has been let loose within our hearts. 'For this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'

Once upon a time a mother and her child sat together, when suddenly the child's eye caught sight of a scar upon her mother's white arm. 'Oh, mother,' said she, 'what a dreadful mark! and on your arm, too! How did you ever get such a wound?' Said the mother, 'Come you here. my child, and I shall tell you once for all. One day when you were very young, you stumbled and fell across the hearth towards the fire. You were in great danger. And I ran forward and put this arm between the fire and you

and lifted you up unharmed. But the fire burned me, and left this mark upon my arm.'

'You dear, dear mother,' said the child, 'let me kiss and kiss that wound!'

'His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.' Yes: but 'He was wounded for our transgressions. With His stripes we are healed.'

XVI

THE GRACE OF THE SACRAMENT

'Not discerning the Lord's body.'—1 Corinthians xi. 29.

What is the hidden grace of the Sacrament which has so drawn out the mind of the Church in her efforts to apprehend it, and has so impressed and wrought upon the Church as to lead men even into excesses?

The first and manifest blessing of the Lord's Supper is that it reminds us of our Lord, and reminds us of Him on the eve of His death. For this end our Lord ordained it. 'He took bread and brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me'; and 'After the same manner also He took the cup . . . saying, This cup is the new testament in My

blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.'

We cannot sit down to the Lord's Table even with intelligence, not to say with devotion, without thinking of Him who gave up His life for us all. As the disciples on the way to Emmaus did not know Christ though they had been walking by His side, yet recognised Him 'in the breaking of bread,' so, precisely, it is the hope of Christ that we whose hearts may have been secretly falling away from Him, falling out of vivid and direct communion with Him, because of the world, because of ourselves, our own neglects, our own slackness and bluntness, it is His hope that as we sit down with Him at the table our eyes may be opened, and we may see Him with fresh eyes, and love Him with that new tenderness and purer devotion which we feel towards one whom we have never loved as we should have loved and who has not complained but has only waited. There is in most sensitive hearts a certain shame

of ourselves as we sit down with Christ, and we lose it only when we have taken upon ourselves a higher vow of love.

That is the first grace of the Sacrament: it takes us back with our eyes and with our hearts to the night of Gethsemane, to the night before Calvary. The whole scene takes place again. 'That night in which He was betrayed, the Saviour of the world took bread.' Though He knew that He was about to be betrayed, Jesus was thinking not of Himself, but of how He might fortify those men whom His death would leave bewildered and lonely. So He founded the sacred rite, and promised that, as often as they or any of His people should observe it, His Face would be near them and His Voice distinct. The whole scene comes back. The Garden, and in the moonlight our Lord upon His knees alone. It all comes back: the judgment-hall and the cruelty of the world—Peter's denial, Christ's sad look, then the bearing of the Cross, the mocking of the priests, the brutality of

the soldiers, the nails, the Crown of thorns, the darkness, the Cry, and then the Silence when men looked into each other's face and grew terrified at their success. It all comes back; and it softens our hearts, we know not altogether why. It is not pity for the weak that we feel; no, it is gratitude that there was no weakness, but only the strength of faith and hope and love, the endurance of God. This death does not turn our hearts away in helpless anger against a world where such things can take place: no, it reconciles us, far down, to a world where such a thing did indeed take place. In the Cross of Christ we see indeed the power and darkness of this world; yes, but we see something still greater in direct conflict with that power and darkness.

For this end at least Christ ordained the Supper, that each time we take the bread and the cup we may remember Him.

But the Supper has a further design,

and as a matter of fact has achieved more than that. It intends more than merely to awaken or revive an *emotion*. Emotion refreshes life: but no life can rest upon an emotion only. Our life, our hope, must rest upon a truth. And so Christ's dying comes to be *interpreted* by us in the light of our deep human needs. Every soul that has sinned has a fear of God, and only the vision of God's perfect Love —such as we have in the death of Jesus Christ for man, where we see Divine Love tried even to death but not overcome— only the vision of God's perfect Love grasped and applied by each of us to himself can cast out the fear and ignorance of God which sin has brought into our lives. Now, it was Jesus Christ Himself who taught us to believe that He was dying for our sins, that He was dying to undo all that had separated us and was still separating us from the God and Father of our spirits. Let us believe that, let us meet our own fears and doubts with this great fact, that Jesus Christ

has given us authority to say that God for His sake will forgive every penitent life its sin.

It was for this further end, we may well believe—indeed, we know—that Jesus ordained this Feast: that the great truth might visit us from time to time, interrupting our doubts, composing our fears, leading us through a new seriousness to a new quietness and confidence—the great truth that God so loved the world that He gave His Son to save us from our sins and from all that sin has brought. As we break the bread and take the cup we are to remember that, so that our soul may rest from its trouble and all its secret pains.

There is still more in the Holy Sacrament. There is something more which Christ is there willing to bestow, something more than the grace of holy recollection, something more than the proof of God's pardon of the penitent. In some way which, however mysterious it may be, is real, Jesus intends us in the

Sacrament to receive something of God Himself, something of His (Christ's) own mystical body and blood, of His supernatural life.

We cannot ignore—simply because they are mysterious—such deep utterances of our Lord as, 'Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood, ye have no life in you,' and 'This is that Bread of Life of which if a man eat he shall not die.' Or the words, 'Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you.' I would not push such expressions beyond the limit which the whole sense and spirit of the Gospel lays upon them. I would not deduce the materialistic doctrine that Jesus Christ is substantially present—His real body, His real blood—in the Sacrament. But I do believe that these words indicate and promise that Jesus Christ is *really* present to feed and sustain and nourish our souls. The Lord's Supper is not merely a reminiscence, not merely a new calling to mind of the merits of Christ's sacrifice; in the Supper, He Himself is

set before us to be received as the sustenance of our souls.

The manna which God sent to the children of Israel in the wilderness was indeed a proof of God's love; but at the same time, and first of all, it was *food*, food without which they should have died.

I cannot dwell on this aspect of the grace of the Supper. I would have you approach the Table of the Lord—I would fain approach it myself, hoping indeed for light upon my way, and for the new pardon of God,—but I would fain approach the Table seeking for food, for a new infusion of Christ, for a really new Power, not my own and not any mere excitement of my own, but the Power that was in Christ, so that I may walk with more joy and fulness in His service and overtake those ideals which come and go. Let us not err by expecting too little from Christ: let us believe not the least but the most we may. Is it not a law of the Kingdom of God that He answers us according to our faith?

When we pray to God to give us a fresh sense of His forgiveness, if we do not ask amiss, light comes to us from the Cross of Christ. And again, when we are conscious not so much of *sin* as of weakness, want of power, want of life and enterprise for God, then, when once again we pray in all our weakness, do we not receive this renewal of life so that we can speak of living by the power of God? In short, God will give us not only light in our darkness when we ask it meekly, but will give us also power, spirit, life, if we have the faith to ask this greater good. And so, the Lord's Supper may be to us not only the reassurance of God's forgiveness for Christ's sake; but as we take the symbols to ourselves and pray for power from Christ, for Christ Himself, why should He not come definitely into our lives in some real contribution of personal and holy force?

What if this be the deep secret, the inmost gift of the Feast, the characteristic grace of it, that here Christ would

fain give us His own Power, His own Life? If that be so, and if we come asking only for a new pledge of His pardon, and not asking for new Power and Quickening to live upon a higher level and more entirely for Him, may He not be disappointed in us and grieved at the poorness of our thoughts? May He not say, 'Hitherto ye have asked Me nothing: ask, and ye shall receive'? 'If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'

Let us put these things together, and we shall be nearer to understanding all that Christ holds in reserve in this Feast for faithful souls. He is there not only to give us that inward light and quietness

which come with the forgiveness of our sins: He is there to give us of His own life, of His own energy, to give us of Himself. It is true that men have fallen into error by leaning excessively upon the grace of the Sacrament. Let us see that we do not err by thinking too slightly of it. There is a carelessness about communicating in our day, an easiness and want of seriousness, which permits people to be irregular at Communion, and to disregard the duty of preparation; and it all means that we at any rate are in danger not of exaggerating the importance of the Sacrament, but of making little, indeed nothing, of it. Let us hope greatly, for the Mercy of the Lord is upon us all just according as we hope in Him.

XVII

OUR RESPONSE TO THE CROSS

'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.'—2 CORINTHIANS v. 14-17.

IN these verses the Apostle makes a distinction between two kinds of knowledge of Jesus Christ, and indeed between two kinds of love for Jesus Christ. It will be a profitable thing for us to consider what he says here; for he seems to give his preference to that kind of knowledge of Jesus Christ and that kind of love for Jesus which we are apt to put in an inferior place, as being less desirable and we had supposed less warm and intense.

The Apostle tells us here a thing which is most interesting in itself, namely, that he also, as well, that is to say, as Peter and James and John and the others, knew Jesus after the flesh. He also had seen Jesus of Nazareth. He knew Him as a figure, as a name, as a man. He knew what Jesus had stood for, what kind of things He had said. He knew the stir which His teaching had made in high quarters, and how that stir had been whipped up by the passions and prejudices of rulers, and by the ignorance and servility of a mob, until it became a storm, with the callousness and brutality of a natural tempest—and that in this storm Jesus had been nailed to a Cross and racked to death. S. Paul tells us here that he knew all that as well as other people. And he knew not only that: he knew the story of Jesus as it had come to be known, the story doubtless which we have in substance in our gospels. He knew the beautiful words which Jesus had uttered, the deep assuaging things He had said

about this life of ours. He knew the holy and loving conception of God, as the Great Father, which He had offered to mankind. He knew also the strength, the calmness, the invincible atmosphere of God, by the help of which Jesus had been sustained through those three years of deepening trial. He knew what had happened on Calvary—and how what had happened there had seemed to men of the world, to the Pilates and the Caiaphases and the Herods, to be the end of it all, but how rather it was now clear that the apparent failure of Christ had been the beginning of the triumph of an Eternal Spirit which that death on Calvary had unloosed. All these things S. Paul knew, and he calls all *that* the knowledge of Jesus according to the flesh. And what he says about that kind of knowledge of Jesus is not that it is inferior to the later knowledge which he goes on to describe, but simply that, in his own case, it was earlier, and that for himself that earlier knowledge had to

give way to a life of communion with the Spirit of Jesus, a spirit no longer bound by local circumstances, but now become an element in the atmosphere, a haunting, pleading, divine Soul over our own soul seeking entrance and occupation and fulfilment in every one of us.

Now, this is a way of looking at the whole matter of our attitude to Jesus Christ which we are in need of recalling.

We may easily fall into the mistake of supposing that because we never saw Christ in the flesh, we are therefore at a disadvantage; or, again, we may suppose that if we had only seen Him in the flesh as S. John saw Him, we also should have loved Christ as he loved Christ, and might indeed have leaned our head upon His breast. But neither of these things necessarily follows. There were people who saw Jesus face to face, who heard His gracious voice, people who were admitted even to behold His loneliness and

to witness the utterness and solitude of His Holy Life, who nevertheless like Judas could leave His side and go out and betray Him. And on the other hand, there have been in every age, as there were in the generation that followed His Crucifixion, people who never saw Jesus face to face, who yet died at the hands of a hostile world for the love of Him. And the last beatitude which Jesus uttered, before He left this world in His exalted state, was concerning people situated as we are: 'Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed.'

On this whole matter, the deepest words I know are words of this same Apostle, to whom surely was given the final insight into the whole meaning of Christ. I mean the words, 'There is first that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.' The one kind of knowledge is not better than the other; the one is the means towards the other. The one is preparation, the other fulfilment. The one is the body, the other

the Spirit. The one is not higher than the other—each is appropriate at a certain stage in our spiritual life.

Take, for example, the love that subsists between a mother and her child. That love rests on a profound basis of physical contact penetrated, on the one side and on the other, by needs and satisfactions, by the weakness of the one and the strength of the other; and all this sustained, fortified, refined by innumerable incidents, events, memories, hopes, and the habits of many years. The fine result of all these things is this beautiful relationship between a mother and her child. It is love according to the flesh: love by contact and association and memory. But is that to be the end of such a love? or will such a love perish when the physical circumstances are changed or withdrawn? When they are separated from each other, when the one can no longer feel the touch of a vanished hand, must the love thereupon die? Nay: 'Love is not love which alters

when it alteration finds.' It is the very nature and proof of love that such a dislocation of circumstances only puts a new strain upon the mutual feeling and raises it to a new purity and power. And how will this love prove itself to have been love indeed, when the circumstances have been changed or shattered even in which it had its birth? How will a child prove to himself and prove to his mother that it was love indeed which bound them in the old days? He will prove it by living where he must now live, as seeing her though she is now invisible. He will be faithful to his memory of her, faithful to that spiritual appeal and demand which she, though absent, though dead it may be, still makes upon him. And in every hour when he enters into the inner chamber of his own far-stretching memories, his mother—no longer according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit—shall draw near to him, and her holy influence will merge for him with all holy influences, with God, with Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, and with his own final hope.

Looking back over a space of time, S. Paul saw that this was how the love of a man to Jesus Christ ought to grow and get beyond itself and become complete in the Spirit. He saw that they only may be said to love Christ who now, in this actual world of conflicting things, live as Christ would have them, and live in the Spirit of Christ. He felt by the call of a mysterious Power within himself that what Christ is asking from us is not the mere idle dreaming over other days, however that may be used to refresh the roots of our life. He saw that the whole business of Christianity is that we proceed upon it, that we give ourselves up freely to its ideals and to its innermost Spirit. And what was its innermost Spirit? And here again we have in S. Paul the final Revelation.

Looking back over those thirty years or more which we may assume as intervening between the Crucifixion and the

day when he wrote his most characteristic letters, recalling what had happened to himself, and how Christ had come to unmake and remake his whole world for him, S. Paul saw—with such lucidity that for him henceforth there was no other Gospel—this. He saw that the overcoming thing in Christ was not His message, not His words however beautiful, not the hopes for man which He uttered. No. He saw that the overcoming, invincible, inexhaustible thing about Christ was His death in love, His passion to give Himself away. It was His silence, His weakness, His readiness to die; it was His refusal to strike back—it was this impalpable quality of Spirit in Him which had given Him the victory, and would always give Him the victory, to the end of the world.

It was this—His silence, His forgiveness, His intercession for His enemies, in a word, His death in love, His Cross—which from the very beginning won the victory; even from that moment when

the chief priests and rulers, having succeeded in murdering Him, discovered that they had kindled a fire in their own hearts, so that they fled from the Cross, beating their breasts and saying, 'What next?'

And it was this profound and final insight which enabled S. Paul to bind together the Sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifice of all who in every age give their lives to men in Christ's Spirit. It is from this point of view that he can speak of us being called upon in our day to make perfect what may be lacking in the sufferings of Christ. For there is a sense in which it was not the sacrifice of Christ Himself which first broke the hostile heart of this His greatest apostle. There is a sense in which it was not the blood of Christ Himself, but the blood of Christ's first martyr, which let loose the cleansing flood in S. Paul's soul. It was, we may say, the blood of holy S. Stephen, it was *his* silence, *his* forgiveness—'Lord, forgive

them'—it was *his* beautiful faith which like an anvil broke the hammer of the Apostle's wrath, and left him helpless and disarmed before S. Stephen's Master outside the Gate of Damascus! It was the sense of this, that Christ was not a man, but an incarnate Spirit, and the instrument of God, which pulled him up in his career and felled him to the ground. And it was this—namely, his experience—which gave him his glowing message. And what was that message? It was this: that just as it was the meekness unto death of Christ, the perfect forgiveness and absence of rebellion in His suffering Soul, which hushed the crowd on the day and hour of Calvary; just as it was the same holy meekness and absence of rebellion in S. Stephen which laid the fuel on what had soon to be his own altar-fire; even so he, S. Paul, was here in this world, and every one who names Christ's name is here in this world, to incarnate, to express that same Holy Spirit of meekness, of forgiveness, of

silence, of confidence in God, of being ready to die for the love of Him who died for us—that spirit which is the Spirit of God, and which dwelt in all fulness in bodily form in our only Lord and Saviour.

XVIII

SINGING AND SERVING

'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.'—S. Mark xiv. 26.

In those heavy days now past we used to hear many a brave story of how some one did something against great odds, or, face to face with death, uttered some great and simple word. We heard of plain men singing a hymn and setting out to meet their fate. And it lifted up our hearts, bowed down as they were under the weight of the general burden, to ponder such incidents. From one point of view it added indeed to our grief that they were high-hearted youths capable of such things who were passing in clouds out of this world, a world which would need them so greatly; but from another point of view it brought pride and grati-

tude to know that human souls, sprung from our loins, were capable still of this greatness.

It is simply true to say that the only kind of bravery which we in this country can honour, is a bravery which is full of modesty, full of humility and dependence. And it is not fanciful to reason that it is because, after all, Christian ideas and Christian personalities have controlled the spirit of our nation, that this, and not mere strength or boastfulness, wins our sober and sustained admiration. The only kind of heroism which we as a nation can continue to honour, is a heroism, I repeat, which is not pride, but one which has a background of faith and even of tenderness.

Perhaps it was their inability to conceive of a fortitude which rests in sentiment, and which may easily be obscured by the gentle manners and amenities of a long Christian civilisation, which led our late enemies to their immense miscalculation of the possibilities of the

English-speaking peoples for the austerities and endurances of war. In the dominant philosophy and war literature of Germany, the idea seemed always to be that tenderness and gentleness deprive the soul of man of a certain hardihood and force. There, as almost everywhere where they were dealing with the human soul, they were at fault. So far is it from being true of us as a people that gentleness and softness of heart weaken the fibre and toughness of the soul, it would appear that the very opposite is the case with us.

And so it comes to pass that for every story which illustrates the sheer bravery of our warriors, there is a story of equal authenticity which illustrates their tenderness. Cromwell wandering about the marshlands of Huntingdonshire, thinking, praying, weeping; Sir Philip Sidney at the battle of Zutphen; Nelson, just before he dies, asking Hardy to stoop down and kiss him—these are the stories which betray, or rather which declare, the

last secret of the English-speaking soul. We set out, so to speak, our hearts swelling with the tumult and the tenderness of a hymn.

Here is a verse from Holy Scripture which seems to me to embody, in a lyrical and imperishable form, this high sentiment. We read in the Gospels that when Jesus and His disciples 'had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.' Let us think of these words in the hope that together we may feel the poetry of them and the beauty of them, and the great fortitude softened by this very quality of humility and dependence, which, I repeat, we shall always demand of any mere bravery that would win our admiration.

. . . . .

It was, as the hymn puts it, 'on the night on which he was betrayed.' Judas had gone out into the night, making all that followed inevitable. Our Lord and His disciples had partaken, as He knew, for the last time of the bread and wine.

He had spoken to them, according as they could bear it, of the changes that lay in wait for them. Then, I gather, there was silence. Thereafter they sang an hymn.

Scholars tell us that it was a well-known hymn, a hymn such as was in place at the Passover. It was a hymn, that is to say, which they had all known from their childhood, a hymn which they had heard their fathers sing in days before they understood the meaning of the words or could understand why people in this world when they are no longer children sing at all, or why they sing to God.

And then on the tenderness and softness of that hymn, we read, they set out—to the Mount of Olives, to Gethsemane, to Calvary, and to life.

Now, all sorts of things crowd in on a man's mind when he ponders such a situation. And here are one or two of the things that occur to me. Once again, of course, I am moved to the heart

by the whole idea of it. I do not mean to say that those disciples, at the time when they were singing, knew why they were singing, or how they would look back upon it. But that is how we are all placed at all times. We never know really what we are doing, and what it all will come to mean. We never know *how* we shall yet look back upon things that we did and recall the circumstances in which we did them. There are things which we are doing now, perhaps even at this moment; and later on, in the light of things which may be already on the way, these things which we are doing now, these words which we are thinking about at the moment—all these may have the power to deliver us one day from some darkness on the way of life or from some amazement.

. . . . .

Probably Jesus alone knew what the singing of this hymn meant—that it was the last hymn they would sing together, the last hymn He would sing

on earth; and from that point of view it would be a great experience for Him, helping Him, we have no doubt, to bear what He had to pass through that night and next day. He would like to feel that He stood in the tradition of His fathers, that He was singing, as a full-grown man understanding why, what He had sung as a prattling child by His mother's side. He would feel, too, that what He was about to do—to lay down His life in love—was no strange thing really; that it was what the best souls of His own beloved people had done in all the ages that were past, though in His own case it was something more than a repetition of their faithfulness. For no one, reading the gospels fairly, can deny that our Lord perceived, no matter how mysterious it is to us, that, in the words of the prophet, 'we all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'

And so, I repeat, it would help to make

Jesus feel that the sufferings which lay before Him that night and on the morrow were not merely accidental events, but were related to the sufferings of all holy souls—that they were the waves of that mighty river of love which rolls through the ages from the heart of God.

Another thing that occurs to me to say is that we can often *sing* when we cannot *speak*, when we are beyond speaking. This indeed is the very function of singing. It is the expression of something deeper than our reason; it is the fortitude of the soul beset by life. Singing is the play of our higher reason, of our whole being, which is more ancient, more authoritative, more enduring, than is our reason, which is only a late faculty. And so Lord Saltoun was right, who declared that the songs of a nation are a more enduring monument than its laws.

It is, then, good to begin to sing even when one does not feel like singing. For one thing leads on to another, and by singing we are able in some way to assert

to our souls things which, for the time being, have sunk below the horizon, or have been blotted out by clouds. We awake old associations of other days when we could sing, and by the help of a wonderful power which God has given us we actually do begin, for the time being, to possess again all the old things which had gone. And so we ought to rebuke that formula for spiritual indolence which we often quote to ourselves with the view of justifying ourselves. We often say we are not in the mood for some fine exercise of the soul; we say we are too sad, too heavy, too bruised and broken. We say we shall wait till the spirit returns to us, forgetting that we are here to invoke the spirit, and at no time more passionately and insistently than when the spirit has departed from us.

This was the charge which Isaiah brought against the people of his day, even the good people. It is true that they also had many reasons for silence

towards God. Their country lay desolate, and things still more dreadful than those which had occurred seemed to be hanging over them; and, like birds before the breaking of a storm, their souls were silent within them. But Isaiah rebuked them and made it a charge that 'no man was calling upon his soul to lay hold on God'; no man was protesting against his own inward silence. On the contrary, they were allowing themselves to be victimised by circumstances, permitting life and the world to strike their souls mute and motionless.

When Cromwell lay dying, and the good people round his bed felt or foresaw the troubles that lay in wait for them and for England, the great man lifted his powerful head and said, 'Is there no one present who will praise the Lord?'

. . . . .

Another thing which occurs to me to say is to urge upon us all the immeasurable advantage and wisdom of knowing before-

hand something which we *can* sing when the darkness falls. It is a great thing to know the language of sincere feeling. To me there is no one more to be pitied, I would add no one more to be blamed, than one who, when all his lights are lowered, has nothing to say—nothing to say about what is happening to him, nothing to say about what he feels, nothing to say to a fellow-man, and nothing to say to God.

Now, we have many a humble proverb to warn us against the hard consequences of unpreparedness. Our Lord devoted an entire parable as a grave precaution against those who, like the five foolish virgins, had nothing to fall back upon in an emergency. It is a very grave injustice which parents may do their children when they neglect to teach them the language of faith. Later on, those children mix with the world, and the world has its way with them; for there is no body of ideas held together by some hymn, or by the memory of

some gracious personality of the Word of God, which would have protested within them against the dominion of mere circumstances and events. Happy are they who have something to fall back upon which takes them nearer to God.

'When they had sung an hymn, they went out.' There are those who set out into life without a hymn; and there are those again who have the hymn, yet do not set out.

As to the first—those who set out without the hymn. Whatever be true of other nations, it is true of this nation of ours that we will never do our best under the inspiration of merely material hopes. The great things this nation has done it has done, when all is said, for no corruptible crown. It was this that kept up our hearts in our tragic time. It was not for territory, not for revenge, not for pride, that we strove and suffered and held on. It was, whatever light-minded and forgetful people may say to the contrary, in obedience to a total view of

what life means, in obedience to a kind of sense of honour towards God, in the memory of things of the Spirit which we had known from the beginning—like a hymn of our childhood—to which we could not be unfaithful without inner torment and shame.

• • • • •

As for those who sing the hymn and do not set out; as for those who sing the hymn and sit indoors leaving the world to go on its own sad disastrous way, without their rebuke, without their encouragement, without their ministry—these also are to be blamed. They are salt without savour, salt without saltness, salt without contact with the very surroundings which it is its function to penetrate—concerning which salt our Lord in one of His severest sayings declared that it was fit for nothing, that fair-minded men out in the world would trample it under foot, treating it with contempt.

There are those, I say, who set out

without the hymn. Well, a day is coming when they will miss the hymn.

There is only one fine formula for life. It is the formula of this beautiful story which tells us how Jesus and His few puzzled friends 'sang an hymn, and went out'—to meet life.

XIX

THE DEATH OF CHRIST NOT A MERE INCIDENT

'The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'
REVELATION xiii. 8.

THERE are two main lines of approach to the Cross of Jesus: and souls have become beautiful and holy by the one way and by the other. The Passion of Him who by what He did saved the world, has been viewed now from one and again from another of two standpoints. I do not mean to say that we are left free to choose which standpoint we shall adopt. Still less do I mean to say that we are ever at liberty to disparage the Christianity of those who nourish their religious life on that aspect of the Cross which is not the prevailing one in our mind. All that I mean is

that under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, as we must believe, the mind of the Church has been directed now to the one point of view and again to the other, according to the necessities of the case. There is the view that in the Passion of Jesus we have the complete unveiling of the Heart of God—the very Heart of God laid bare, even as in some hour of utter sincerity, of penitence or grief or happiness, we might ourselves in some deed show our whole heart. That is one view of the Cross: that there, in a word, we see God. We see God in conflict with everything that opposes His own holy love. We see Him wrestling with the nature of things and asserting Himself in the face of the last extremity of death.

In the other view, we see in the Passion of Jesus, God's way of discovering us to ourselves. In this view, we are to see in Christ's sacrifice the awful distance in spirit between what we are and what God meant by man. In this view, the Cross of Christ is the measure of the

world. Christ is God's plummet let down from heaven to test the truth of all souls. Christ is God's instrument of judgment; as the Apostle says, 'He shall judge all men by that man Christ Jesus.'

The Cross of Jesus is a place where we may judge ourselves; where we may see to what extent the spirit of our daily life is in harmony with His Spirit who there laid down His life. Nay, the question is a deeper one than even that. The question which arises in your heart and mine as we see Christ in Sacrifice, is not, Is my life like that? It is rather, Does my own heart go out in gratitude, in love, in a kind of envy, towards Him who found Himself capable of such a death?

It is a pathetic story which we have in all the gospels, of Jesus being passed on from one to another before the world could make up its mind to do what it wanted to do and to put Him to death. Judas, the high priest, Pilate, Herod—back and forward, from hand to hand,

that tender soul was flung about. Man after man was invited to pronounce judgment upon Him, or, to speak more precisely, was invited to pronounce judgment between the demand for His death and their own more or less clear perception that He was not worthy of death. It is a pathetic and shameful story, and contains incidents—such as the smiting of our Saviour's cheek and the spitting in His face—we can scarcely endure to read.

But it is something more than a pathetic and shameful story: and Jesus is something more than a pathetic and ill-treated figure throughout. It is a story of the Divine Majesty exposing and pronouncing judgment upon those squalid and petty men. They supposed they were being invited to judge Jesus: what was happening was that Jesus was judging them. They supposed that they were being asked to say what they thought of Jesus. What has happened is that now we know by the light of Christ's calmness and silence in their presence what to think of them.

Without speaking, Jesus has pronounced judgment upon them for ever in the name alike of God and of man. Judas, Pilate, Herod, the Pharisees—these are now so many types of moral obliquity and baseness.

Now, what happened in that far-off day happens to-day and always. We judge ourselves by our attitude to Holy Personality. In our judgments, we declare what we ourselves are. Judas, Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, the Pharisees, the Roman soldiers, the passers-by—they were all judged that day by the death of Christ. For between them, and amongst them, they crucified Jesus. It was not Judas alone, nor Pilate alone, nor Herod alone, nor the mob alone; it was all of them, the one helping the other, the one leading on to the other, the one making the other possible—it was all of them that crucified Him. Nay, it was not even all of them who did it: it was the whole world that did it, acting through

them; the whole world which supported them or tolerated them. In short, it was the human heart—the human heart as it had come to be—which, encountering Jesus here in this world, was so disturbed and angered and tormented by Him and by what He seemed to signify, that the human heart schemed and planned to put Him out of the way.

We may say, all this happened long ago. We agree that it was a shameful thing. But how are we involved in the guilt of it?

Let me say a word about that. Anything of this kind which happened, as we say, long ago, is, in spirit, always happening and always threatening to happen. The reasons and causes in the world and within human nature which led on to it are still there, and still within us, until they are encountered and overthrown. It was not Judas, not Pilate, not Herod, who put Christ to death. It was the spirit of treachery in Judas, the spirit of cowardice in Pilate,

the spirit of contempt for human weakness in Herod, which nailed the Saviour to the Cross. And, alas! we cannot say that these spirits are dead, or that they never have a moment's indulgence from ourselves.

> 'O break, O break, hard heart of mine!
> Thy weak self-love and guilty pride
> His Pilate and His Judas were:
> Jesus our Lord is crucified!'

Certainly we can see clearly in the New Testament that this was an aspect of our Lord's death which was kept powerfully before the Church at the beginning. S. Paul writing to the Galatians reminds them that Jesus Christ was evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified before them. Now, Jesus Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia; He died on Calvary. But what the Apostle means is that Jesus Christ once upon a time was crucified in such and such circumstances and by such and such hands; that He was crucified not because of any temporary or local misunder-

standing: He was crucified because He was what He was, and because those who crucified Him were what they were: and that what He was, He is: and what men were, men are; that therefore the death of Christ was not a merely historical event. It was the emerging into the plane of human history of the Life of a Holy God contending with and triumphing over 'the despotisms and empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world.'

By declaring that 'before their eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently crucified,' S. Paul intended that this gospel of the grace of God coming near to men had been made known to them, and that—as we are all compelled to take up some attitude to the presentation of God—they had taken up the attitude of love to Christ and of fellowship with His sufferings.

The death of our Lord was no mere episode. It was the public issue of the Holiness of God meeting and mastering the world-spirit; and it ranges us,

according to the sympathy and spirit of our heart, on the side of God or on the other side. Christ came to raise the final controversy in every human heart which through all the ages should become aware of how He met and bore this life of ours. He was set for the rise and the fall of many. That passion and death of His is so free from any local confusions; it declares its own principle with such awful simplicity; it is so indisputably the highest and holiest thing we can conceive of God and man; that there is no shirking the question which Pilate tried to shirk: 'What must I do with this Jesus who is called the Christ?'

The world in our day provides, perhaps as never before, distractions, preoccupations, that help people to avoid thinking seriously of what they are doing with their life as a whole, and of what they would like to do with it. But so long as it is unanswered the question keeps coming—this question, namely, What am I going to do with that private judgment

upon myself which I acknowledge when I lift up my eyes to the Son of God in Sacrifice?

As a man looks into his own heart, or recalls his life, he may feel that in a very real sense it was his sin that brought Christ to the Cross.

Let us believe that it was indeed our sin, in order that, gazing at Him who was stretched there, we may hear Him absolve us, covering our sin in the greatness of His forgiveness.

XX

THE STIR WHICH COMES WITH HOPE

'And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself.'—1 John iii. 3.

As we get older, life, from the point of view of religion, becomes much simpler, becomes indeed a very simple thing. We begin to see that 'one thing only is needful'—and this, that we each have some honest and direct communion with Christ which controls us; some dear and private love which keeps our heart soft and open to the voices which beckon us towards the eternal world of the good. As we get older—and now I am speaking only of those who like ourselves have had to do with religion, with its words and ideas and calls, all our days—as we get older, we see very plainly that the one thing we need to be afraid of is

not so much that we shall fall into grievous sins, but rather that we shall fall away from the living God, that we shall lose a certain tenderness of the soul, a certain freshness of view, a certain fine liability to pain and joy with regard to Christ, such as we knew in our youth in other matters, in those matters which were at that time the most urgent and precious. We see, as we get older, that the most grave result which life and the world can have upon us is not that in some sudden moment we fall, but that we become case-hardened, habituated to a certain average and conventional idea of ourselves. In short, the gravest result of life is that it rob us of our wings, that it congeal within us the rich and fluid qualities of our nature—our instinct and power to protest against low aims, to pray, to bemoan ourselves, to cry out and triumph in every last loneliness. The one thing we come to be afraid of is not that we shall break through the decencies of life, but only this—that we shall get

past feeling, and end at best in a certain monotonous correctness, having lost from the world of our soul the thrill of the dawn and the pathos of the twilight, the awe and majesty of the immeasurable sea, the glancing misgivings of our spirit like the dreadful glory of waves. The effect of life which is most to be dreaded is that we become stale.

It would be a great matter, therefore, if at a time like this we could come upon some thought, some vision of reality, of God, which might have the effect of sending our blood more strongly through our veins—something which would have the effect upon us of making us rise; something which would stir us as we can remember ourselves having been stirred, in some 'crowded hour of glorious life,' when something dawned upon us making new heavens and a new earth.

Deeply considered, these words of S. John are well fitted to bring to all of us a new interest in ourselves, to let loose

within us unsuspected wells of living water. And further, they convey but *one* thought, they have that simplicity which as we get older we come to desire the more in our spiritual directions.

The Apostle was, probably, a very old man when he wrote this letter. You detect in it the reminiscence of an old man, the kindly and reconciling reminiscence of a good old man. We are listening to one who out of a happy memory is talking on and on.

The point he has come to is this: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God': that is to say, 'How generous of God, to call people like us His children!' Yet such we are. The world—those who are out of the secret—do not know us for children of God. Indeed, we should never have claimed such a degree for ourselves. We seem to ourselves in many things far indeed from being God's children. And yet there is that now within us which at least makes it

not ridiculous in us to call ourselves such. Besides, that is just what makes God God: He sees things that are—our weaknesses, our horrid and obstinate backslidings—as though they were not; and things that yet are not—our secret yearnings after better ways, our trembling confidence that we shall yet be wholly His—as though they were.

That is our condition just now: we are, by the calling of God, in God's idea of us, His children—His children *de jure*, His children potentially, through the insight and charity of His love. And here is the point: it is not yet manifest what we shall be: it is not yet manifest what we shall be when we have become everything which, according to God's generous way of thinking, we have it in us to become. But we know that one day we shall see God—one day when these trembling lights by which we live give place to the light which is now inaccessible yet full of glory. That is our hope, says S. John, speaking to people

like ourselves, who perhaps, as we could believe, thought the words too good, too holy for folk like them. That is our hope: and, he adds, 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure.'

Well, that is our hope also, unless our faith is altogether vain. We hope one day, in God's own time and through His own wise discipline of us, to enjoy face to face those blessed things which meanwhile we see in moments and lose and see again. No language is too majestic or too tender to describe the things which God has in reserve for those who love Him. We claim nothing from God—as of our merit; we hope everything, of His grace, because He is what He is. A haven to a long-threatened, tempest-worn ship; a cool hand upon a feverish brow; a flood of tears to friends after a long estrangement; the seeing our way clearly after long waiting; good news after suspense that made us old and sick—these are but faint anticipations of what

must be coming for faithful and aspiring souls, when God concludes the world, and the long day begins. That is our hope: and, says this disciple of Jesus, 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.'

When we come to think of it, there is nothing which so immediately lifts us above ourselves as just a hope. S. Paul says, 'We are saved by hope.' It is quite true. When all is said, the one instrument which Jesus used to save men was this—He helped them to hope. And men to-day are on the way of salvation just in the measure in which they hope in God through Him.

I do not know what effect the great hope which our religion sets before us, namely, that one day we shall see Christ face to face with joy—I do not know what effect it has upon us every day of our life. I know what effect it ought to have; I know what effect it cannot but have, if it is truly a *hope* with us. I mean, if it is a presence in our soul. This hope

and every other may easily become much less—may become, indeed, nothing at all. It may be simply a dead sort of idea, as a kind of wind-up to this present world, an idea which we do not refuse, but an idea which we do not embrace. But in that case it is not, properly speaking, a hope at all, and it has no influence upon our real life: whereas it is the very sign of a living hope that it stirs and quickens us to live up to its height.

Recall just now any time in your life when some hope, when some event, which was likely to emancipate you, to deliver you it may be from suspense or fear—recall a time when some such hope dawned for you and came near. Do you not remember that it had this wonderful effect upon you — it brought a new spiritual quality into your life? It laid a new strain upon you, it made a new demand upon you, which was not really a demand at all, for you were ready to comply with it. It was a time when—although you might not have so described

it—you were very near to God. In short, that hope, whatever it was, simply because it was a hope, had something of the influence which S. John here describes: 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself.'

You will further see why it is that every high hope has this so deep, so beautiful, and so easy influence—the very gift of cleansing us—when you consider what really happens to us when such a hope breaks on us. It really puts a new honour upon our human nature, which compels us to treat ourselves with a new reverence. Or, to put it in other words, hope is a divine guest whom we count ourselves happy to be asked to honour and serve.

All these things, which are true of hope on any level, find their purest expression in the case of such a hope as is here set before us. The hope of seeing Christ, the hope that one day we shall dwell in the presence of God—that is a hope which, in the measure that we realise its greatness

and glory, must deliver us from all monotony, and fill each day and hour with a certain private strength, as a gentle wind will stir and enliven trees. And how much we need this inner stirring and exultation let us each humbly confess.

The story is told that a lady dressed in simple black visited a home somewhere near Braemar, and entered into friendly talk with the woman—a widow recently bereaved—who dwelt there. After many kind and womanly words the stranger left. Soon afterwards the neighbours gathered in with eager faces. 'You had the Queen!' said they. 'What!' said she. 'The Queen!' said they. 'It was the Queen who visited you just now.' And the story goes that the simple woman immediately went back into her home muttering to herself, 'The Queen, the Queen,' and, lifting the chair on which her royal visitor had sat, she raised it from the floor and gave it a place out of the traffic of her little home, saying, 'The Queen sat on it, and while I live none

shall ever sit upon it except her, if she should care to come again.' Simple that, superstitious; but its permanent value lies here: it expressed an instinct —a beautiful and true instinct—the very instinct which S. John is describing when he says, 'Every man that hath this hope in him'—the hope of seeing Christ at last—'purifieth himself even as Christ is pure.'

There is no higher appeal, no surer, no more successful appeal, than the appeal of hope—unless, indeed, we have lost something from our soul which we must not lose. For this is the surest sign that spiritually we are still alive—that we can still react upon, still respond to, any hopeful word about ourselves, feeling the honour which such an opinion proposes for us.

Jesus Christ took this way to touch the hearts of people in His day. He gave them hope. He made an opening for them one by one, in the dead wall of human and inevitable circumstance. He

let in the air. He gave them a name, an idea of themselves which made them kings. Indeed, there is a scripture which says that very thing—'He hath made us to be kings . . . unto God.'

Christ has spoken to us; He has spoken about us; He has spoken for us—that is our dignity. And there is something which rises inevitably in every religious heart which would copy the behaviour of the simple woman of my story, and would make us say: 'There He sat, there He spoke to me, and no other shall occupy that place in my heart so long as I live—except Himself, if He should care to come again.' What is it that underlies all the ritual of the Old Testament, and such ritual as the rite of baptism, for example, in the New Testament? What is the unquenchable idea that finds its utterance in washings and fastings, in severities, in abstinence, in the whiteness of the linen of sacred things—what is it but the precious instinct to do honour, in personal cleanness and orderliness,

to that new idea of ourselves which in one way or another has come to us? It is the instinct to try to be worthy of the love that has been shown us. It is the imperious demand which we make upon ourselves to follow the highest when we truly see it. 'Every man who hath a great hope purifieth himself.'

XXI

THE TENDERNESS OF CHRIST TOWARDS THOSE WHO HAVE FAILED HIM

'Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.'—S. John xx. 19, 20.

We cannot read our New Testament, where it describes the days which followed immediately upon the Crucifixion of our Lord, without feeling that that Awful Event had plunged the disciples for the time being into amazement and despair. It was not what they had expected. And although Jesus had been careful to warn them against all worldly anticipations, it is quite evident to us that the disciples had never abandoned the hope that one day, it might be even at the

very last moment, their Master would summon some Supernatural Force to His side and mount an earthly throne. We know what, as a matter of fact, did happen. Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried.

We can, with a good deal of exactness, follow the disciples through the days that succeeded. At first, I say, they are struck dumb with disappointment and horror. 'I go a-fishing,' says Peter, in anger and sorrow. It is as though he had said, 'No more spirituality for me. Let me not try to screw myself up to anything higher than a plain, average man. Let me go back to my old work at the nets—I should never have left it.' And Thomas, when some one spoke to him about Jesus, broke out with a hasty retort: 'Except I shall put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.' And something of the same kind was the condition of them all. We can understand it: perhaps even better than those

disciples themselves could. For, although they may not have been aware of it, their anger and disappointment would be, very largely, anger and disappointment at themselves. They had not shown themselves very brave. At the first real challenge of difficulty, they had fled. They had left Jesus to die, alone—alone except for His mother, Mary Magdalene, and John. The Crucifixion of Jesus had pronounced judgment upon a great many people that day; and it had pronounced judgment upon them with the others. The Crucifixion had made it quite clear to everybody who cared to think about them, that the disciples at that stage were merely worldly men. Now, we are never so angry as when we are angry at ourselves. We are never so disappointed as when we are disappointed in ourselves. For some one to have failed us, in whom we trusted—that is a blow; but not the worst, for we may still comfort ourselves in God and with our own thoughts. But to have found our-

selves out in some failure, to have assumed that we would be sure to behave in some faithful way, and, as a matter of fact, to have behaved no better than a moral coward, that is a disheartening discovery. And it was a discovery of this kind that the disciples had also made.

There they were, then, as I imagine them, full of disappointment concerning Christ, things not having turned out as they had expected, the whole world for the time being seeming to them to be awry and senseless. Along with that, they had the feeling, though they may not have understood themselves at the first, that, talk as they might in their anger about going back to their old habits, as a matter of fact they could never be the same as they had been—that now that they had been going about with Christ for three years, dealing with matters which it might be were beyond them, yet not quite beyond them and not always beyond them, they could never now go back to those occupations with which

at one time they had been content. When a man has once seen Christ, he may one day abandon Christ, but he can never be quite the same. The fact is, I very much doubt whether a man can ever really banish from his spirit that Holy Face, once truly seen. And then, I repeat, mingling with these two feelings there was that other, that the death of Jesus had tried *them* in the balance and had found them wanting. It was to men in that unhappy condition, with their minds all confused and in darkness because of troubles from the outside, and because of their own miserable thoughts about themselves, that Jesus came. We read that He stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you,' and then, 'He showed unto them His hands and His side.' The text closes by telling us that 'Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.'

There were, then, as it seems to me, three quite distinct feelings present in the sorrow of the disciples, three quite distinct ingredients which together made

the bitterness of their cup. And the gladness which broke over their hearts like a flood when they saw the wounds of Jesus, sprang from this, that Jesus, appearing as He did, took the sting from those three sets of unhappy thoughts.

In the first place, then, it was to men who were honestly disappointed in Christ, disappointed that He had permitted Himself to die, that Jesus appeared showing them His wounds. Seeing Him there, and thus, a great blindness passed away from those disciples, a great worldliness and stupidity of the spirit was scattered like clouds by wind and sun. That came to pass in their minds which had just happened in the case of the two on the way to Emmaus—they saw, by a flash of insight into their own Scriptures and into their own history, that it behoved the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His Glory. They were Jews, and, seeing Jesus there with His pierced hands and side, they saw not the contradiction of the ancient faith, but the awful

fulfilment of it. Christ in disappointing their poor worldly thoughts about Him, and poor worldly ambitions for Him, had not disappointed them on the High and Holy Plane, on that only plane whereon the soul can be satisfied—when we see God stooping in Holy Love and Suffering to save.

Resolving that darkness, Jesus, by appearing now as He did, dealt also with a second source of darkness in their spirits. For I am quite sure that much of the sorrow of the disciples in the days immediately after Calvary came to them as they looked forward to the days that lay before them. How were they to go on without that Society, that Companionship, about which they were only now beginning to understand what it had been to them? It is an old saying that we do not know all the value of things until we are deprived of them. And this is very true of any deep friendship, any intimacy of human hearts, and especially of an intimacy in which God is present.

But, appearing now as He did, that great sorrow in their hearts was composed. It was as though He, Christ, were saying to them: 'I am still with you. All that I ever was to you, I am still, and may be to you more and more. I was dead: I am alive for evermore. Death is nothing to such a communion as we may have.' And so, once more 'were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.'

Still, I cannot but think that much of the sorrow of the disciples arose from their miserable thoughts about themselves. They had seen Christ taken captive, and they had forsaken Him. One of them had seen Him buffeted in the Judgment Hall and had denied Him. They had seen Him crucified and made a public spectacle, while they had stood afar off beholding these things. The Cross had found them out. Christ's three years' patience with them had gone for nothing. All His words to them—and in the keenness of their grief those words came crowding in—all His interest in

them, His gentle warning to them with regard each to his particular failing, all the force and mystery of His example, all the great unspeakable scenes—the Mount of Transfiguration and the Garden of Gethsemane—it had all done nothing for them in the essential matters of character. They had only been miserable place-hunters, hanging on to Jesus in the hope of some turn of fortune. They had, at the best, only been talkers, saying what they would do if ever they had a chance to show what brave men they were; and when the chance did offer, when the Cross was raised on Calvary, they had fled into hiding like cowards and not men. 'And Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you, and He showed unto them His hands and His side.' And how did it comfort them, how did it make them glad, to see His wounds? Would it not add to their shame to see His hands and His side? Would it not have been a great kindness if Jesus had veiled His wounds, thus

sparing them this goad to their own painful memories? I think not. I think, on the contrary, that it was the wounds of Jesus which they most wanted to see. For away at the back of all their miserable thoughts about themselves there was this thought—that Jesus would never have any need of their love now. That they had failed Him in the only days in which they might have been faithful to Him. That now He was away in a region where He had no need of their loyalty, either in the dim abode of shades, or in the radiant Presence of His Father. They had had their chance, and they had let it pass. 'But Jesus appeared and showed unto them His wounds. Then were they glad.'

Do you see what I mean? They saw His wounds—still wounds. He was not yet, then, away beyond their reach, beyond a certain need of them. He had still—His wounds. There was something they could yet do: they could live in the world as those who have seen the unhealed

wounds of the Saviour of the World. I am quite sure that there was this thought in the warm love of the first Christians: that it was in their power somehow to hold fellowship with the sufferings of Jesus. They speak of making perfect that which is lacking in those sufferings. And I am sure what is intended is just what many of us can understand. We too have failed towards Christ in many a shameful way. And at times our bitterness is this, that we think that we shall never be able to reinstate ourselves in Christ's affection. To us, too, to us at this sacred season, if our hearts are really engaged, Jesus comes, and He shows us His hands and His side. He shows us His wounds that are still open. And we too must be glad when we see Him thus. We too must be glad that He has not gone quite beyond us as though He needed nothing of us now. We must be glad that though in the past we may have failed in many a test which He laid upon us, or in some great test, He once

again appears to us, and shows us His wounds—shows us that there is still many a thing which we can do for His blessed sake, and in the doing may lose the bitterness of our memories.

XXII

THE PLACE WHERE WE BECOME SURE

'He was known of them in breaking of bread.'
S. Luke xxiv. 35.

It is a principle of my thinking upon serious matters, upon the doctrines and practices of the Church, for example, that things happen on the large scale in the history of doctrine or ceremonial for the same reasons and in the same order as they happen in individual serious minds. I have no difficulty in believing that at the very outset the Lord's Supper was a memorial feast; that at the very beginning, when Christian people gathered round the Lord's Table, they had chiefly in their minds the words with which our Lord Himself instituted that Supper as an ordinance, namely, 'This do in remembrance of Me.'

I believe, that is to say, that at the very beginning, when good people met for the breaking of bread, it was all intended to help them to a more vivid and definite recollection of Him Whom they had loved and lost awhile. When they broke the bread and handed it one to the other, there could not but happen in their minds the very things that our Lord had in view. They could not but recall other scenes and occasions when they had broken this bread, when they had handed it to those whom they had formerly known, who were now no longer with them; and back and back their minds could not but go to the time when He had been with them. As often as they came together for this purpose, moment by moment the immediate things would pass away from them, their pressing cares, their fears; and they would begin to live in other days, set free from the bondage of things seen, and breathing the atmosphere of things no longer seen. They would realise that truly 'they had

meat to eat that the world knew not of,' that the table at which they sat belonged to an House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

I say, I can well believe that those who first celebrated the Lord's Supper began with a simple human intention like that. It was an act of deliberate recollection, a studied and intense invitation to the spirit of other days and other scenes, that thus their own spirits might be bathed in the waters of forgetfulness, in the waters also of a holy memory.

But we know that in our own case, when we come under the power of any fine memory, more happens to us at the moment than the mere recollection. In fact, we must take care never to use the word 'mere' in connection with any faculty or mood of the soul; for every great emotion leads on to other emotions, and if we deal honourably by any fine mood it will lead us to the Face of God. They speak cynically, therefore, who disparage this aspect in which many

good people still hold the Lord's Supper. There is no such thing as *mere* memory. A fine memory becomes in turn the occasion and opportunity for deeper secrets of the spirit. For does it not happen thus when fine memories steal over us—that for the time being we are transported, and think of those past days not as past, but as now once more with us? It is the very mystery and greatness of our soul, that the days to which we are still faithful do not die. Through memory, as through a gate, we have entered into a garden of the Lord which is always there, though we, in our absorption in immediate things, forget it and neglect it, and allow ourselves at times to speak and feel as though that garden had never been.

In other words, Memory leads on to Communion; for the recollection of one beloved brings a subtle spiritual contact with that beloved one. And so it is a thing not to be wondered at, but to be anticipated, that, from being a Memorial

Feast, the Lord's Supper came to be a time of conscious fellowship and communion with the departed and yet present Lord. For myself, I can forgive, for I can understand, all the exaggerations within the extreme language of the saints, and have little quarrel with those who speak of the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine as bringing a tangible contact with our Lord. And so, I repeat, I do not wonder that, from being a Memorial Feast, the Lord's Supper passed naturally and inevitably into an occasion of more intense Communion; so that in our own habitual speech we designate the Lord's Supper, *The* Communion.

Still another stage of feeling follows by the same necessity. If it is inevitable, as I hold it is in all honourable souls, that an hour of fine recollection brings with it a fresh communion with Him whom in memory we adore—by the same inevitable working of the human mind, as often as we become conscious of this fellowship through memory, we become

conscious of another impulse rising in our hearts. It is this: we feel ourselves summoned to take a new hold of ourselves, to readjust ourselves, to separate ourselves from unworthy things. In short, we feel an appeal coming to us from the region of the past and from the tenderness of our souls at the moment, an appeal to us ourselves to live worthy of this new communion with that ancient love. And so, by a beautiful necessity which every fine soul understands, this sacred Feast which passes from an act of Memory to an act of Communion, passes now on to an act of Consecration. We feel invincibly that it becomes us who have had such experiences, such memories, who are competent, as we see with great joy we still are, for such fellowships—it becomes us ourselves to live finely, wisely, not unworthily of those or of Him whose intercourse with us has given our life its truest value.

And so we speak of the Last Supper as 'the Sacrament.' We take that old Latin

word which meant the vow of allegiance of a Roman soldier to the Senate and People of Rome, his vow of fidelity to his fatherland—we take that old word, and we use it to describe our own inmost intention. We dedicate ourselves to Him with whom through memory we commune.

The Lord's Supper, the Communion, the Sacrament; Commemoration, Communion, Consecration; the Past, the Present, the Future; Yesterday, and To-day, and For Ever—with Christ in the heart of each!

XXIII

YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER

'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.'
HEBREWS iii. 14.

THIS was a counsel given to men in the early Church, lest they should be disheartened too much over the appearance of things: God's delay; persecution; the falling away of men like Demas; 'the contempt of the proud.'

. . . . .

Here we are bidden, as they were, to sit down and recall what the reasons were, or rather what the forces were (for we are moved not by reasons but by forces), which led us to become Christians—that is, to throw in our lot with Christ.

In fact, it is good for us, if we wish to

recover 'the grace of a day that is dead' or dying, to recall the day itself. For there is a hardening process in the very passing of time: so that we need continually to pray God 'to stir up all that is within us' (Psalm 103).

Looking back, we shall see again the greatness and sheer goodness of Christ.

Probably, too—indeed, quite certainly—it was when we were at some particular crisis that we were tender enough to make a clean break with some habit of life or with some mood and to come under the rule of Christ.

Take the example of Christ's conveyance of forgiveness to us on the ground of our pledged devotion of ourselves to God through Him. Our fathers called that a contract or covenant: and so indeed it was. Now, if we break that covenant, things are what they were: 'we are yet in our sins.'

And so in a firm recollection there is the Appeal to our Honour.

But the heart knoweth its own secret;

and every one who ever loved Christ did so for the sake of something deep and true, and of such a kind that, if we ever forget it, it can only mean that we have given up all hope of being or becoming the kind of person we once upon a time thought we might be, the kind of person, too, that we were sure we could be—with the help of Christ.

Well, we are to go back to these things, so that we may return to life with fresh hearts and faces aglow with a revived experience.

We do well from time to time to visit in person or in memory and imagination the place where rests the dust of some one dear to us. As we stand in the sacred place the effect of time and of all the trivial days is apt to pass from our minds. The insults at the hands of life, or the pride over some corruptible crown which we have won, is apt there to leave us. We recover our simplicity. We perceive how little we really need in order to go through life with dignity. A

beautiful memory will do it. For a beautiful memory, as we cherish it, becomes something more than a memory. Like Christ Himself, it rises from the dead into newness of life. From being a thing in the past, it becomes a present help and a pledge of an everlasting light which need never fail us, until it fails as fails the light of the morning star in the plenitude of the Great Sunrise.

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